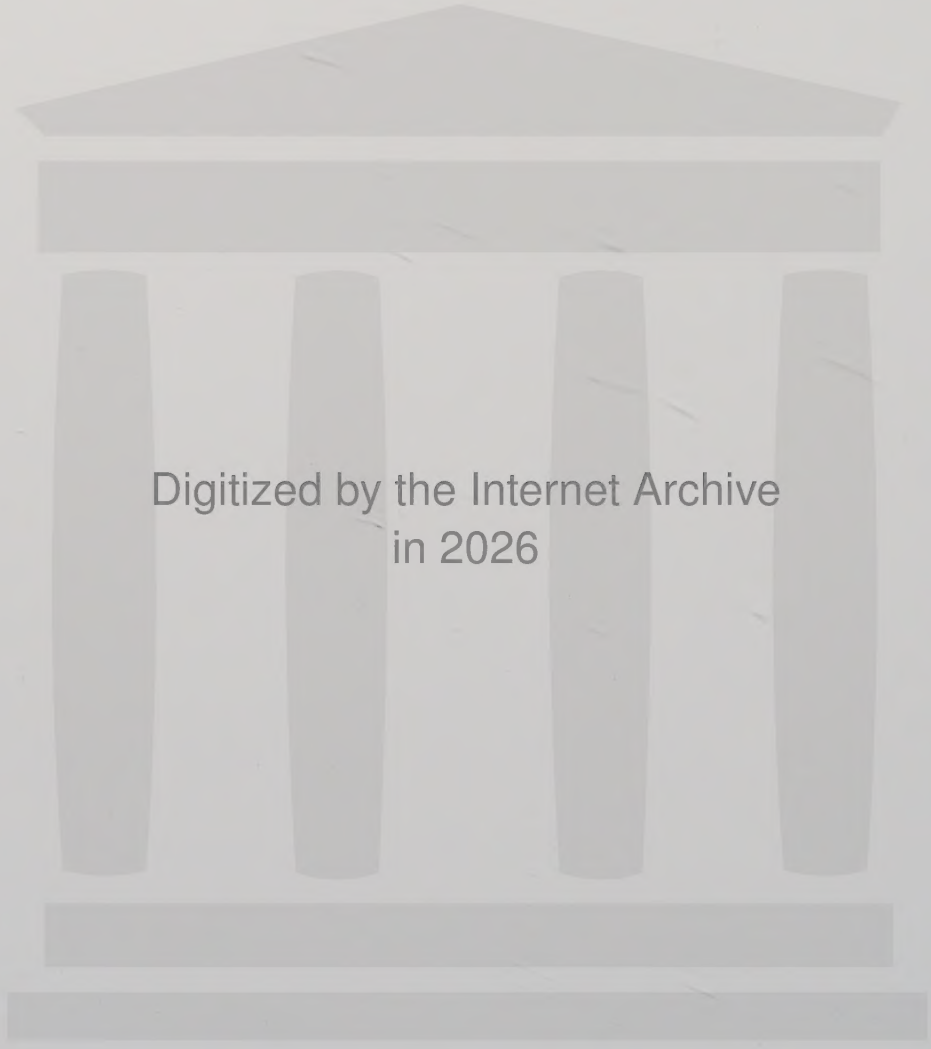
Johann Wolfgang Goethe

Henry Gibson Atkins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Henry Gibson Atkins

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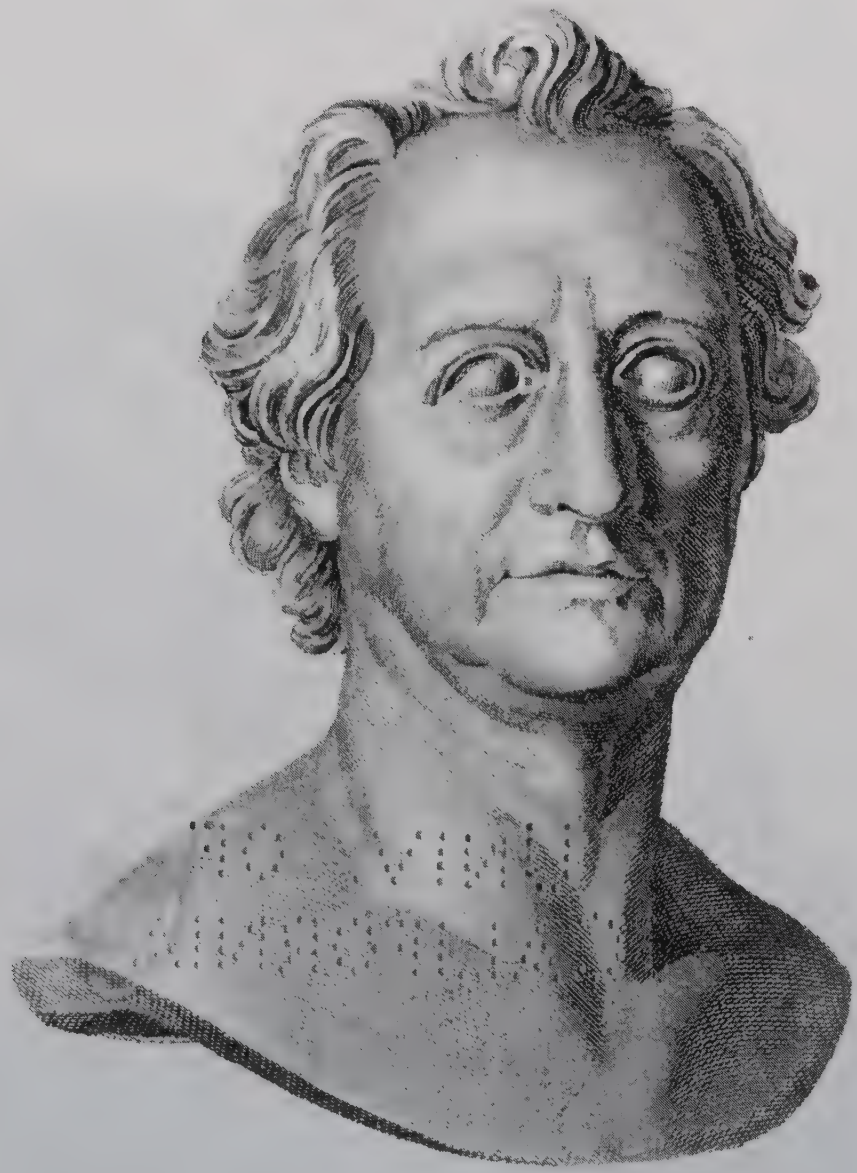
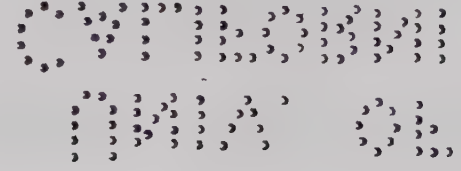


GOETHE

GOETHE HOUSE IN FRANKFORT



JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE

BY

H. G. ATKINS

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THIS short biography of Goethe is intended to deal rather with the author's life than with his works. As, however, the works of Goethe are perhaps more intimately bound up with his life than is the case with any other of the world's greatest writers, being, as he himself declared, "fragments of a great confession," his writings, and especially the more directly autobiographical among them, form one of our chief sources of information concerning his life, and of elucidation of the motives that govern it. The length of the different sections is not regulated by the number of years comprised, but is determined rather by the degree of external movement and interest of the several periods.

The chief biographies of Goethe are given in the brief bibliographical note at the end of the volume. The source of quotations is given at the foot of the page.

The translations are throughout my own.

H. G. A.

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LIFE OF GOETHE

CHAPTER I

NATIVE TOWN AND PARENTAGE

ON February 28, 1687, there settled in the imperial free city of Frankfort-on-the-Maine a man who, coming there to seek a modest livelihood by the exercise of his craft, was destined to be the means of conferring on the city he entered thus humbly its proudest claim to distinction.

This was the journeyman tailor, Frederich Georg Goethe, from the little Thuringian town of Artern-on-the-Unstrut, son of the farrier, Hans Christian Goethe, who, after the completion of his apprenticeship and after long wanderings, came at last, in his thirtieth year, to Frankfort, and there established himself.

The master-tailor with whom he found employ-

ment was Sebastian Lutz, and on April 15 of the same year Goethe married his daughter, Anna Elizabeth. Of the children of this first marriage none survived, and in 1705, five years after the death of the first wife, Goethe took as his second wife Cornelia Schellhorn, the daughter of a tailor, and widow of the host of the inn Zum Weidenhof, who was then in her thirty-sixth year. The widower had already in 1704 a fortune which placed him among the ratepayers of the first class; the widow's fortune was more than half as large as his own, and after the death, in the year of their marriage, of her father, the master-tailor Walter, who was also assessed at the highest rating, she received in addition a third of his considerable fortune. Thus the material prosperity of the family was very firmly established, and when the man who, forty-three years before, had entered the gates of Frankfort as a young tailor, with no other outfit than his prospects, and, as it would appear, an attractive manner with his fellow-men, and a not unreciprocated regard for the opposite sex, died at Frankfort in 1730, it was as one of its wealthiest inhabitants.

To judge by contemporary evidence, he would appear to have been a man of extremely agreeable, even courtly manners, very fond of music, and himself a more than average performer. That he was alive to the advantages of education is shown

by the fact that he gave his youngest son an education of the best the time afforded, including travels which comprised an extended tour in Italy. The trait in his character which rendered him disagreeable to some was a pride which is understandable, if not excusable, in the man who had so successfully fashioned his own career. He it probably was who took up into his coat-of-arms the three lyres which the poet's father still bore.

Of Frederic Georg Goethe we have spoken at some length, for he is the real founder of the family, and the man who made possible the achievements by which his grandson was to render illustrious both his name and his adopted city.

His wife Cornelia survived him, and, though she was eighty years of age at the poet's birth, lived to form one of the happiest recollections of his youth. Of the three children of this second marriage the youngest was Johann Caspar, who was born at Frankfort in 1710, and died there in 1782. Like his father, he was fond of music, while he had received the most careful of educations.

From the Coburg Gymnasium he had gone to Leipsic to study law, graduated with distinction at Giessen, and practised at the Supreme Court (*Reichskammergericht*) at Wetzlar. As we have

seen, he travelled considerably for those days, and on his return he offered his services to his native town, which he honestly believed he could serve to advantage, in consideration of his legal knowledge and the experience derived from his travels. When the offer was declined, he withdrew entirely from public life, and, the more effectually to preclude the possibility of ever participating in the administration of the city, acquired the title of an Imperial Councillor. To quote his son's words:

"Immediately upon his return from his travels, my father had, in accordance with his own char acteristic views, conceived the idea, in order to fit himself for the service of the city, of undertaking one of the subordinate offices, and performing its duties without emolument, provided it were conferred upon him without ballot. He characteristically believed, according to the conception which he had of himself, and in the consciousness of his good intentions, that he deserved such a distinction, which, indeed, was neither legal nor traditional. Accordingly, when his request was refused, he was vexed and angry, and swore never to accept any position whatsoever, and, in order to render it impossible, procured for himself the title of an Imperial Councillor, which the Mayor and the oldest Alderman bore as a special title of distinction. Thereby he had made himself the

equal of the highest, and could not begin again from the lowest rung."*

And in the same place his son proceeds: "The same motive induced him to become a suitor for the hand of the daughter of the Mayor, whereby he became in consideration of this, too, excluded from the council."

This daughter of the chief magistrate, whom Johann Caspar Goethe married on August 20, 1748 1748, at the age of thirty-eight—as we gather, rather from prudential than sentimental motives—was Catherine Elizabeth Textor, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Johann Wolfgang Textor, who the year before had been somewhat unexpectedly raised to the highest dignity of the imperial city. The *Schultheiss* Dr. Textor seems to have been a peace-loving, dignified, unassuming old Conservative, for whom the routine of his office and dignity had less attraction than the care of the old garden which is so beautifully described in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*,† and which was the paradise of his two grandchildren as well as the scene of the old man's constant attention and activity.

Any description of Goethe's parents at once

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book II., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., p. 112 *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*, Book I., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., p. 55 *et seq.*

recalls the famous lines in which he himself analyses, as it were, the constituents of his own being, and which may be freely rendered as follows:

"My father's I in mind and frame,
The order-loving Tory;
From mother dear my glad heart came,
And love to spin a story.
If grandsire was a gallant bold,
There's fire still in the embers;
If grandam loved display and gold—
Why, that's still in the members.
And if these parts then, after all,
No human skill can sunder,
How such a fellow can you call
Original, I wonder?"*

His father was earnest, even pedantic, and lacking in that *Genialität* which was so pronounced in the host of the Weidenhof. Yet we must not underestimate the importance of his training and influence when considering the son's development.

"It is a pious wish of all fathers to see realized in their sons what they have themselves missed, almost as though they lived for the second time, and wished this second time to take due advantage of the experiences of the first. In the consciousness of his own learning, confiding in his own

* Weimar edition, vol. iii., p. 368 (*Zahme Xenien*, vi.).

power of persistence, and in distrust of the teachers of his day, the father resolved to instruct his children himself, and only in so far as appeared necessary to have individual lessons given by special masters."*

This desire to give his children, and, for the matter of that, in the first years of their married life, his wife, too, those educational advantages which he had himself acquired with such effort and prized so highly, was a trait of his sterling but over-earnest character, which appears later to have developed into a somewhat morose pedantry, and undue, almost tyrannous, insistence upon details, which, while leaving him the respect, deprived him of the love of his family.

This side of his character Meyer thus describes: "Love of order is his most prominent characteristic. In his house, in his collections, in the education of his children, it manifests itself, often in unnecessary exactitude. One trait alone brings into this morally irreproachable life a breath of poetry—the grateful remembrance of the one event of his life, a journey to Italy. As often happens with a pedantic spirit, for which every breath that blows may easily disturb the painfully established order, there early becomes pronounced a certain intolerance, now in the form of domineering, now of

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book I., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., pp. 44, 45.

caprice. He cannot understand his wife, only for a brief space is he the confidant of his son, with his daughter he lives at feud. At last he sits almost unheeded for years, lonely and discontented, in his corner, and dies as an old man of seventy-two, almost unmourned."*

Little sign indeed of the spark of genius in this morose and formal man! He did his best to convert his risen family into the best of bourgeois —good, honest, peace-loving, and law-abiding, with a due understanding of, and a correct love for, literature and the arts, but bourgeois all the same. And when his son turned out a genius, for whom the cage thus carefully constructed was so small and cramping that he broke its bars and flew away, it was a bitter disappointment, and one that no triumphs in another sphere could atone for.

What a different picture when we turn to the poet's mother! Little more than a child when married, and only eighteen when her eldest son was born, she poured out upon that son of her youth all the affection of a young girl who had no other outlet for her natural craving for loving and being loved. That her formal marriage with a man twenty years her senior did not develop into one of affection is, under the circumstances, easily to be understood. "I and my Wolfgang

* Richard M. Meyer, *Goethe*, p. 6.

have always held fast to each other, because we were both young together," she said.

Bright, happy, optimistic good-nature and love of her kind, coupled with a ready mother-wit and a quickness of the senses and perceptions, rather than a delight in the abstract operations of the intellect, were her main characteristics, while the creative side of her son's genius was already foreshadowed in her talent for story-telling and the graphic, if somewhat homely and ungrammatical, vigour of her pen. As she charmed her friends and her children in these early years, so later on she became the loved and honoured friend of some of the highest in the land. Altogether "Frau Aja," as she was christened after an old ballad, is one of the most genial, cheery, pleasant, and sympathetic figures to be met with in the history of German or any other literature, and one that seems to us, as we look back on the many blended qualities of her full and happy life, the very ideal of a poet's mother. And we cannot do better in conclusion than give her "philosophy," as summed up in her own words:

"I have the grace from God, that no human soul ever went away from me discontented, whatever the age or rank might be. I love my fellow-men, and that young and old alike feel; pass without pretension through the world, and that pleases all Eve's sons and daughters; be-

moralize nobody, always try to look for the good side, and leave the bad one to Him who created mankind, and who understands best-how to round off the corners; and on this plan I live well, happy, and contented." Such she was, and such she remained up to a ripe old age, happy in her round of duties and her comfortable domestic circle, and living in the life and triumphing in the triumphs of her *Hätschelhans*, her darling; and when she passed quietly away in 1808 at the age of seventy-seven, she was mourned as a personal friend by the wide and varied circle of those whose enthusiastic friendship and love her endearing qualities had won.

So much for Goethe's ancestry and parentage. Before proceeding to the story of his life, a few words must be said about the city of his birth. He did not leave his native town before its influences had had time to make their impression upon him. Consciously and unconsciously they were among the most important factors in his development in youth and early manhood, and not the least interesting part of his autobiography is the attempt to give, from the vantage-ground of distance and a ripened experience, an appreciation of the value of those early impressions.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the anomalous position of the German imperial cities, in their relation to the State, was one of the most

fruitful sources of feud and disturbance. In Frankfort there was a chronic quarrel between the Council of the city and the Emperor. The Mayor had originally been Governor of the city in the interests of the Emperor, but, after several times acquiring by way of pledge the right of having an independent Mayor, the town had finally, in 1372, purchased this privilege, and the Mayor became the first officer of the city, lifelong President of the Council, and, since the time of Charles VII., by virtue of his position Imperial Councillor (*Kaiserlicher Rat*).

In addition to this state of contention between the city and outside authority, there existed dissensions within the city itself, especially between the "patricians" and the guilds. The patricians, consisting of nobles from the surrounding country, who had settled in the town and who had assimilated some of the most distinguished of the citizen class, had at one time enjoyed exclusively the rights and privileges of power; but gradually, and owing especially to the disturbing influence of times of trouble and strife, democratic elements had been added to the governing body, so that the constitution became so complex as not easily to admit of a simple definition, and we find it variously described as a "modified aristocracy," and as being a "compound of aristocracy and democracy,"

For a description of the town itself at this period, we cannot do better than give in Goethe's own words the impressions it made upon him as he roamed its streets in his early boyhood:

"What attracted the attention of the child more than all was the many little towns within the town, the fortresses within the fortress—that is to say, the walled-in convent precincts, and the more or less castle-like places surviving from former centuries. . . . There was nothing of architectural grandeur to be seen in Frankfort in those days: everything pointed to a distant past, which had been very unsettled both for town and district. Gates and towers, which marked the boundary of the old town; then farther off gates again, towers, walls, bridges, ramparts, ditches, with which the new town was surrounded—everything told only too clearly that the necessity of securing safety to the community in unsettled times had called these institutions into existence, that the squares and streets, even the new ones, which were wider and finer, all owed their origin to chance and caprice and to no controlling spirit."*

It was in such a city, in which the commercialism of the present jostled the feudalism of the past, where the life of to-day, with its busy trade and its practical utilitarianism, was found

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book I., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., p. 23 *et seq.*

FRANKFORT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

side by side with the monuments and memories of bygone days, while its inhabitants were not unconscious of their dignity and independence as members of an "imperial free city," that Germany's greatest poet was born, and spent the years of his impressionable boyhood and youth. And when we add to this that the town contained also in its Jews' quarter an alien Oriental element, where the rites and habits of an entirely different age and civilization remained almost intact and without admixture; and remember, too, the yearly fairs which brought into the town a motley crowd, both Jew and Gentile, from the four corners of the empire and beyond, we see the many-coloured picture of life that unrolled itself before the eyes of the inquisitive and wandering child, and, stimulating his wakening intelligence, developed in him the germs of that cosmopolitanism and universality which is one of his most distinguishing characteristics.

Such were the conditions of time, place, and circumstance, into which Goethe was to be born, and it is apparent that they were on the whole very favourable. Before leaving this part of our subject, however, and our consideration of the town into which the poet was born on August 28, 1749, we might perhaps look into the future, and see how the "imperial free city" was one day to

look upon that date as the one most worthy of celebration in all its long annals.

One hundred and fifty years afterwards, on August 28, 1899, we saw Frankfort—a Frankfort sevenfold increased in numbers—rise up with one consent to do him honour, and the eyes of the cultured world directed to the city of his birth, and watching with approval the homage she pays to "her greatest son."

What gives to Goethe for the student a special and peculiar interest is the fact that he is the only one in that succession of the greatest of the ages —among whom there is claimed for him a place—at whose birth he can be present, whose development he can follow, with whom he can wander through the years of his wonderful boyhood among the scenes and in the streets of the picturesque old city of his birth, whom he can watch in the making both from within and from without, both from his own confessions and from the manifestations of himself which formed the man his friends could see in him. For such a student the town of Frankfort becomes a centre of absorbing interest, and the festival held there in celebration of the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the poet's birth a phenomenon of the greatest significance.

"To think that he was only a poet," was remarked by one who was struck by the wonderful enthusiasm of all classes, and in that remark the

GOETHE MONUMENT IN FRANKFORT

right note was happily, if unconsciously, given. That was, indeed, the real significance of the wonderful demonstration called forth in his proud and most truly appreciative native town. It was not a movement behind which lay any political significance, it was not promoted by any one at all in the interests of any other, it was not the work of a class within the community—it was a great and spontaneous outburst of the enthusiasm of the whole population of a great and flourishing, and to a great extent mercantile, city, in their pride at having given to the world a treasure beyond price

CHAPTER II

BOYHOOD

"ON the 28th of August, 1749, with the stroke of noon, I came into the world at Frankfort-on-the-Maine." With these characteristic words Goethe opens his famous autobiography. At first the child was taken for dead, and it was only after moments of anxiety and the application of every care that the grandmother could call to the mother: "*Rätin, er lebt!*"

The house in the Grosze Hirschgraben where he was born lived in Goethe's memory as "an old house, consisting really of two houses thrown into one. A tower-like staircase led to disconnected rooms, and the inequality of the floors was corrected by steps. For us children, a younger sister and myself, the favourite resort was the big, roomy hall below, which had by the door a big wooden lattice-work, by means of which one came into direct connection with the street and the outside world. Such a bird-cage, with which many houses were provided, was called a *Gerüms*. There the

women sat to sew and knit; there the cook picked her salad; thence the neighbours carried on their conversations. And these *Gerämse* gave the streets in the fine season of the year a Southern appearance."*

On this part of the house—the big, half-open hall on the ground-floor serving the most varied purposes, often coachhouse, storehouse, workplace, and playground in one, and which the Goethe house had in common with all old Frankfort, and, indeed, all old German houses—the old man's memory seems to dwell in after-years with special fondness, and the thought of it brings back the remembrance of many happy hours of childhood spent there, and, too, of many a prank, some of which cost his indulgent parents dear.

In this old house the boy spent the years of his early childhood, in a family consisting, besides father and mother, of a younger sister, Cornelia, and her namesake, the aged grandmother Goethe. To the grandmother's room, a big apartment at the back of the house, the two children made their way for play when lessons were over, and to her chair or her bedside they carried their confidences, and received from her the petting which she was only too ready to give. One of her presents was of more than passing interest for its

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book I., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., p. 12.

recipient, and gave the first incitement to the dramatic impulse of the precocious child. This was the puppet-show with which she presented them, after having surprised them with a performance on the Christmas Eve of 1753, and so "created a new world in the old house."

This most important of all the kind old grandmother's presents was also the last, for from that time she grew weaker and weaker, and when she finally passed away her loss was hardly noticeable to the two children, as for some time before she had disappeared from their little world.

Her death, however, marked an epoch in their lives in another way; for it was the signal for the commencement of that rebuilding of the old house which the son had only postponed out of consideration for her. That work, for which all preparations had already been made in advance, was now taken in hand without delay, and the building commenced which is essentially the *Goethehaus* of Frankfort to-day.

This big undertaking, which, in spite of the characteristic regularity with which the work was carried on, nevertheless compelled the father to give up the idea of continuing uninterrupted the education of the children, meant for the two inseparable playmates a time of relaxed studies, a time of delight, with infinite possibilities in the way of swings and seesaws—a time when the

supervision of interfering elders was partly removed, and the youthful mind had a chance of putting into practice its own ideas of self-development and education.

Sent to a public school, the boy enjoyed much freedom in the society of his schoolfellows, and rapidly widened his experience both of good and bad. "At this time it was," he recounts, "that I really first learnt to know the city of my birth, roaming to and fro in it, as I did, more and more freely and unrestrainedly, partly alone, and partly with merry playmates." Still, in spite of the greater freedom enjoyed, and the new friends of his own age and sex which he made, the one inseparable companion of his boyhood, the sharer of all his joys and sorrows, and the one to whom all the dreams and ambitions of his budding genius were confided, was his sister. The second child, and the only one besides Wolfgang to survive early childhood, Cornelia was born in December, 1750, and till her death, at the age of twenty-seven, all the affection of her somewhat peculiar nature was lavished upon her brilliant brother.

The fates had made a very unequal distribution between the two in respect of gifts both of body and mind. Cornelia, though not without a certain dignity and power of commanding the respect of her fellows, possessed neither beauty nor charm

of person, and in this matter of her external appearance she was unfortunately sensitive in an exaggerated degree. In character, too, the happy touch which blended her brother's qualities into such a perfect harmony was lacking. While with him the father's qualities of head united with the mother's gifts of heart, in her a sterling character, possessed of many solid merits and much moral and intellectual worth, seemed to be combined with some cross-grained element, inherited, perhaps, from her father, which caused its possessor much unhappiness, and prevented her strong and in many respects fine nature from attaining to moral beauty and grace.

She and Wolfgang received in early years much of their education in common, and this, coupled with the father's severity and the very dislike of him which his stiff and somewhat tyrannous pedantry aroused in her rebellious nature, only threw her more completely into the arms of her brother, whom she wellnigh idolized.

Intellectually she was far his inferior; but she had quick perceptions, and even where she did not understand him she appears to have felt his greatness, and to have had for his early literary ambitions and endeavours a sympathy and appreciation which was by no means blind and unreasoning, for it was to her that Goethe confided all his earliest work, and on her criticism that he

depended during the years when his genius was first beginning to feel its wings.

Cornelia married in 1773 Goethe's friend, John George Schlosser, and died, after four years of a not very happy or successful married life, in 1777.

Except for the already mentioned brief interval during the rebuilding of the old house, Goethe did not visit any school, but was educated by his father at home, with the help of masters for special subjects. This plan of his father's Goethe, as we have already seen, ascribed to a twofold cause — namely, the wish his father had, in common with others, to give his son those advantages he had himself missed, and a confidence in his own will and power to do this in the matter of education; and, secondly, a distrust of the teachers of the day. Private lessons, all the same, which he shared with neighbours' children, grew more and more numerous. What the education was which he obtained in this informal manner, how wide, and even motley, in character, and with what a store of images rather than words or ideas it stored his capacious imagination, we know from the pages of his autobiography. For his progress in languages, we have the testimony of written exercises to show that at the age of eight he had already made considerable progress in Latin, Greek, French, and Italian.

But while the father was systematically carrying on his education according to his own carefully reasoned theories, his mother was doing for him still more through the spontaneous play of her own free and untrammelled imagination.

It is a pretty picture we have of mother and son, the fancy of the child catching fire at the spark of genius in the young mother's mind. But let her tell the story herself:

"I was as eager as the children themselves for the hours of story-telling. I was quite curious about the future course of my own improvisations, and any invitation which interrupted these evenings was unwelcome. There I sat, and there Wolfgang held me with his big black eyes. And when the fate of one of his favourites was not according to his fancy, I could see the angry vein swell on his temples, and watch him repress his tears. He would often burst out with: 'But, mother, the princess won't marry the nasty tailor even if he does kill the giant.' And when I made a pause for the night, promising to continue the story on the morrow, I was certain that in the meantime he would think it out for himself, and so he often stimulated my imagination. When I turned the story according to his plan, and told him that he had discovered the ending, he was all fire and flame, and you could see his little heart beating beneath his dress. His grandmother, who made

a great pet of him, was the confidant of all his ideas as to how the story would turn out, and as she repeated them to me, and I turned the story accordingly, there was a little diplomatic secrecy between us, which I never disclosed. I had the pleasure of continuing my story, to the delight and astonishment of my audience, and Wolfgang saw with glowing eyes the fulfilment of his own ideas, and listened with enthusiastic applause."

These early years in the peaceful old town were, however, not to remain undisturbed by the influence of the great events of the outside world. Frankfort had enjoyed during Goethe's childhood a succession of peaceful and prosperous years, but scarcely had he passed his seventh birthday when, in 1756, the Seven Years' War broke out; and though it did not at first affect Frankfort directly, from the beginning it made its influence felt on the boy's surroundings. His grandfather, who had carried the canopy at the coronation of Francis I., and had received from the Empress a heavy golden chain with her portrait, was, with the majority of the family, on the Austrian side, while his father, with the minority, was for Prussia. The result of these divided sympathies was much unpleasantness between the different factions, which, as is usual in the quarrels of relatives, appears to have reached some bitterness, and Goethe draws us a very lively picture of these

modern Montagues and Capulets, who could not meet in the street without the rancour of their party spirit getting the better of them. As for Goethe's father, we are not surprised to hear that after a few unpleasant scenes he had recourse to his usual expedient, and drew back into the privacy of his own house, there to interest himself in the doings of his own party in peace.

Wolfgang, too, whose imagination rather than his reason was appealed to, was all for Prussia, "or rather for Fritz! for what had Prussia to do with us! It was the personality of the great King that affected the minds of all. I rejoiced with my father over our victories, joyfully copied out all the songs of victory, and with almost greater pleasure the lampoons on the opposite party, however bad the rimes might be." But however much this page of living history appealed to his fervid imagination, the war was to touch them closer yet.

As New Year's Day, 1759, approached, the children looked forward to its joys with the usual keen anticipation; but their elders were almost too occupied with graver thoughts to do it justice. Frankfort was already used to the frequent defiling of French troops, but they had never been so frequent as in the last days of the old year. "After the traditional custom of the imperial city, the warder on the chief tower blew his horn

whenever troops approached, and on this New Year's Day his horn was never silent, which was a sign that considerable bodies of troops were in motion on several sides. On this day they were, in fact, marching in larger numbers through the town: people ran to see them pass. Up till now one had only been used to seeing them march through in smaller bodies, but these kept getting bigger and bigger, with no possibility of preventing it if desired. Suffice it to say that on the 2nd of January a column, after marching through Sachsenhausen over the bridge and along the Fahrgasse as far as the Konstablerwache, halted there, overpowered the small commando that formed its escort, took possession of the watch, marched down the Zeil, and after a slight resistance the Hauptwache, too, had to yield. Instantly the peaceful streets were transformed into a camp. There the troops stayed and bivouacked till arrangements were made for their regular quartering."*

This French occupation was destined to be of importance for Goethe's youthful education in several ways.

As his share of the burden, the *Kaiserlicher Rat* had quartered upon him the King's Lieutenant, Comte Thorane, who had the settling of all civil

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book III., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., p. 130 *et seq.*

spoken quickly, and dealt with matters of every-day life, the expressions of which were entirely strange to me. Tragedy was less frequently given, and the measured pace, the regular beat of the alexandrines, the universality of expression, made them in every sense more intelligible. It was not long before I took up the Racine which I found in my father's library, and declaimed the pieces in theatrical fashion, as my ear and the so closely related vocal organs had received them, with great animation, though I could not yet have understood a single entire connected speech. Indeed, I learnt whole passages by heart, and recited them like a parrot; which was all the easier for me from having earlier learnt by heart passages of the Bible, which are generally unintelligible to a child, and accustomed myself to declaim them in the tone of the Protestant preachers."*

What a characteristic picture of the boy, watching the play in a language he less than half understands, while his imagination is only the more stimulated by action and gesture, to which he can give his own interpretation!

As his free pass gave him entrance to all parts of the house, he learned to know the theatre in all its parts and workings, and early became familiar-

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book III., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., p. 142.

ized with matters theatrical both before and behind the scenes. To the access he thus enjoyed to the green-room he owed the distinguished patronage of a little braggart of the name of Derones, who was of the same age as himself, but possessed an attractive sister a couple of years older. This little maiden of fourteen seems to have aroused a certain tender feeling in his breast. "I loved in every way to make myself agreeable to her, but I could not gain her attention," we are told; which the old man, looking back on this child-friend, apparently attractive still in memory, explains by the reflection that "young girls think themselves far in advance of boys who are their inferior in age, and, while fixing their eyes on youths, assume an aunt-like attitude towards the boy who makes them the object of his first devotion!"*

All the same, if to the mature eyes of the girl of fourteen he seemed only a child, he was old enough to fight a duel with the other little man of twelve, which, fortunately, ended without loss of life or blood, in the renewal, after satisfaction given, of the old friendship over a glass of almond milk in the nearest coffee-house.

Meantime his regular education was progressing, even there imagination being used to enliven

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book III., Weimar edition, vol. xxvi., p. 145.

the task. Thus, finding his language studies by the old time-honoured routine of grammar and compendium grow tedious, he conceived the idea of writing a novel in letters, in which a number of brothers and their sister, who are living scattered in the world, conduct a correspondence, each in a different tongue, while the subject-matter is provided by the geographical conditions of the various places and countries where they were supposed to be located. To the youngest brother was allotted the German Hebrew dialect, and this led to the study of Hebrew itself, for, finding that the modern corruption was not to be properly understood without a knowledge of its original form, he threw himself into the task with the additional object of reading the Old Testament in the original, as he already could the New. He represented to his father the necessity of learning that language, and his father, not unwillingly, we may imagine, arranged for him to have private lessons, his teacher being the eccentric Rektor of the Gymnasium, the Doktor Albrecht, the Æsop in cope and wig, of whom the autobiography gives such an amusing account.

This religious tendency, and a deep feeling for the beauties of Biblical language and thought, were among the most marked characteristics of the many-sided boy. Biblical subjects formed a favourite theme of the poets of the day; Klopstock

especially, whose *Messias* was such a favourite of Wolfgang and his sister, had given to the characters of the Old and New Testament a new life and reality. Partly inspired by such works, and partly by his Hebrew and Biblical studies, Goethe, too, conceived the idea of such a Scriptural work.

"To treat the history of Joseph had long been a wish of mine," he says, and now he really set to work, dictating the theme to a poor half-witted youth who lived as ward in his father's house, and whose favourite occupation was the writing or copying of anything entrusted to him. To his surprise, the work actually reached completion, and this led to the idea of bringing together in the same manner earlier poems, which formed a quarto volume, to which the name of *Miscellaneous Poems* was given, a dignified title which seemed to the boy-author to place him in the worshipful company of many famous authors who had made use of it before him. Of the other poems of this time, the most important, and one which is still preserved, is also of a religious character. It is entitled *Die Höllenfahrt Christi*, and won for him much encouragement from parents and friends.

We are now drawing towards the end of the first period, the uninterrupted years of boyhood in his father's home. The close of this time is marked by two events—his love for the Frankfort

Gretchen and the ceremonies connected with the coronation of the Emperor.

We have already seen how he felt at the age of twelve an attraction for the sister of the little Derones—who so wounded him with her aunt-like airs—which was, as it were, a premonition of the susceptibility to the attractions of the opposite sex which was to form one of the potent factors of his life from boyhood to old age. The mystery of the "eternal feminine" was a possession that haunted him, bringing sorrow as well as joy in its train. For good or ill the society of women was necessary to him, acting as an inspiration and a spur, and to the various women who had influence upon his life we owe directly and indirectly a considerable part of his works. The list is a long one, and would include many beside those whom he temporarily enshrined in his heart; the love for mother and sister, and some true friendships, as well as the many actual love-affairs of his life.

The childish admiration for the placid, melancholy little French girl, with her dark, clear-cut face and black hair and eyes, does not seem to have had any very lasting effect, but shortly before completing his fifteenth year we find him inspired with a youthful passion of a more real kind. This was for Gretchen, the sister of one of a set of companions belonging rather to the lower than the middle classes, in whose society he appears at this

period to have spent much of his time, and who first led him to turn his poetical talents to practical account by the writing of wedding and funeral verses, the proceeds of which defrayed the cost of their modest convivialities.

The incident is related at great length, and though it may have attained in retrospect an intensity it never possessed in fact, yet there seems little doubt that the quiet girl, who treated him with affection and real friendship, though by no means reciprocating his ardent youthful passion, did inspire him with more than a mere passing fancy. He dwells very lovingly on the first meeting. "The form of this girl followed me from that moment wherever I went. It was the first lasting impression which one of her sex had made upon me," he tells us.

At any rate, even if she treated him like an elder sister, as the other little maiden had treated him like an aunt, she was very good to him, and gave him some excellent advice; and, above all, warned him to have nothing further to do with the pranks of the wild set with which he was associated. These companions appear to have gone on from more or less harmless practical jokes to more questionable proceedings, and when presently the storm burst, Goethe's name was inevitably implicated.

Meanwhile the coronation of Joseph II. was

approaching, and the festive preparations and the arrival of all the distinguished guests with their trains and followers filled the city with a gay and motley crowd. The coronation day, April 3, 1764, with all its pomp and solemnity, the coronation in the cathedral, and the banquet in the ancient *Römer*, as the Frankfort town-hall was called, was a wonderful day for the impressionable boy, who now saw history being made beneath his eyes, and could himself better appreciate the accounts of those wonderful coronations of the past, such as those of Francis I. and Maria Theresa, the glories of which older people were fond of extolling.

The happiest part of the day was, however, for him the evening, when he roamed with his companions through the gaily-lighted streets at Gretchen's side, as though he was really walking in the happy fields of Elysium. Together they spent the greater part of the night in the happiest good-fellowship, and when at length he escorted Gretchen to her door, she kissed him on the brow —the first and last time, for he was not to see her again.

If on that night the highest pinnacle of bliss seemed to be reached, the catastrophe came with appalling and dramatic suddenness. The next morning he was still in bed, when his mother entered the room in a state of great trouble and perturbation, and, bidding him rise and prepare

for something unpleasant, informed him that everything had been discovered, both the company he had kept, and the dangerous practices in which he had become involved. Though strong in the consciousness of his innocence of any real wrong-doing, yet the boy had a very unpleasant experience, as his protestations were not believed, and his silence was mistaken for obstinacy. But hard as the anger of his father, the suspicions of his friends, and the anxiety for his companions were to bear, his pride and self-esteem were to be more deeply wounded.

After the whole affair had blown over, he still brooded over his woes, picturing all sorts of evils that might have befallen his friends and Gretchen, and refused to be comforted, till at last what no good offices of friends and family could do was accomplished by a violent means. Having at last plucked up courage to confess his love for Gretchen, and to ask after her fate, he learnt the whole unpalatable truth—how her examination had brought out nothing but what was to her credit, and had won her the esteem of all, and how her departure from the town was at her own express wish. Hearing of her statement in regard to himself, the boy wished to know what this had been. "If you wish to know," answered his friend at last, "when asked of you and her intercourse with you, she said quite openly, 'I cannot deny that I saw

him often and liked to see him; but I always looked upon him as a child, and my affection for him was indeed that of a sister.'"

Poor little hero! This was indeed bitter! He could have endured all for her sake, and had already endured for her endless woes of his own making, and to be treated in this fashion after all! Still, the caustic was good for his sore, and he set himself to forget her, and though it was not an easy matter at first, yet we find his heart sufficiently healed to be capable of another tender passion in the comparatively short time which still remained to him at Frankfort.

It is possible that the reminiscent Goethe of half a century later made more of this pretty episode than the reality fully justified, but even if so, we can only be grateful to him for the charming story of romantic youthful love, and the picture of his boyish years which it incidentally preserves.

So the end of his actual boyhood approached, and the time drew near for him to leave his father's home for the larger world of the University. Uninterruptedly his education continued, many-sided if desultory, some work being done to please his father, some to satisfy the somewhat pedantic tutor who had been provided for him after the Gretchen affair, but most of all to please himself. Languages, history, philosophy, nothing

came amiss to him, and gradually we see forming that wide and copious knowledge, the combination of which with great creative power was the special characteristic of his genius. Of wide learning for his age and yet not a bookworm, precocious in mind yet with all the natural gaiety and spontaneity of youth, universally beloved and himself something of a universal lover, such was the youth of sixteen who in the early autumn of 1765 set out for the unknown world of University life in the gay "little Paris on the Plesse."

CHAPTER III

LEIPSIC

IN the company of a bookseller, Fleischer, and his wife, who were travelling to Leipsic to attend the great annual fair, Goethe set out at Michaelmas, 1765, leaving behind him, as he tells us, the city which had borne and reared him, with complete indifference. Frankfort had become distasteful to him; the boyish pleasures had been broken off abruptly by the Gretchen incident, and, once interrupted, the old delight in merely aimless wanderings through the streets of the old town could not reassert itself, while his first great disillusionment had made him take too gloomy a view of the life and institutions of that native city which he had before admired and loved unquestioningly. He had outgrown both his childish pleasures and his childhood's companions, and was longing to try his wings. It was in this hopeful anticipation of a full life with larger possibilities that he reached Leipsic in the month of October. On the 19th of that month he was admitted by

AUERBACH'S KELLER IN LEIPSIC

the Rector of the University as a student "of the Bavarian nation," one of the four "nations" into which the whole University was divided, and into which Goethe as a Frankforter naturally passed.

His lodgings consisted of two rooms in the Feuerkugel, a house looking on to the courtyard which connected the old market and the new, where Lessing had lived ten years before.

He had come to Leipsic with the object of studying law, and he was accordingly inscribed as *Studiosus der Rechte*, and, placing himself under the guidance of Hofrat Böhme, a jurist and professor who lectured on history and public law, threw himself for a short time into the study of that uncongenial subject, and gave some brief hope of fulfilling the expectations in which his father had sent him, and of his present tutor, for whom there was no success outside the narrow limits of his own speciality. However, this temporary enthusiasm soon began to wane, and the attraction of the study of belles-lettres, or philology, as it then began to be called, which had made him think at first of Göttingen, the home of men like Heyne and Michaelis, reasserted itself. Logic seemed to him as lifeless as law, and his eyes turned from the dry operations of the class-room to the actualities of life which presented themselves to him here in Leipsic in so new and attractive a form.

Leipsic was then the centre of refinement among the German Universities, the one that prided itself on its cosmopolitan culture, and under its influence Goethe speedily came. He was not long in perceiving that his standard of dress and speech lent him an invidious distinction in the society in which he moved, and for the boy who from childhood had been endowed with a strong sense of personal dignity this state of things was not to be endured. He had brought with him a complete outfit of new clothes of most excellent material, but of which as regards cut it is sufficient to say that they had been made at home by one of his father's servants, this allotment of double functions to the members of the household being one of the careful Councillor's favourite economies. As his son tells us, "nothing gave him more pleasure than killing two birds with one stone." When, in addition to the testimony of his friends, he saw in the theatre just such a provincial style of dress as his own raise the hearty laughter of the audience, he took heart, and at one sweep changed his whole wardrobe for one more capable of satisfying the exacting Leipsic taste, and for a time, at any rate, he appears to have gone almost to the other extreme, and become just a bit of a dandy.

But Leipsic was not satisfied even now, and exacted yet another transformation before she

could regard the Franconian youth as meeting her standard of culture and refinement. This was the laying aside of his Frankfort, "Upper German" dialect, and the acceptance of the gospel of pure German according to the Leipsic faith. This was a more difficult task than a mere change of dress, and one by no means pleasant, for he was fond of his old Franconian speech, with its rugged picturesqueness and wealth of imagery and quotation.

The whole passage of the autobiography bearing on the subject is interesting both in itself and as throwing a light upon the feeling of the time with regard to dialectic speech:

"Every province loves its dialect, for it is really the element in which the soul breathes. But with what aggressiveness the Meissen dialect managed for a time to rule, and, indeed, exclude the others, is well known. We have suffered for many years under this pedantic sway, and only by much opposition have the various provinces reinstated themselves in their ancient rights. What a young and spirited man endured under this constant tutoring anyone can easily imagine who considers that, together with the pronunciation, to the change of which one at last got accustomed, mode of thought, imagination, feeling, and native character had no less to be sacrificed. And this intolerable demand was made by cultured men and women, whose

shown by mistake into the wrong room, found the great man without his wig, and how, when the horror-stricken servant hastily brought him the missing covering, he showed not the slightest embarrassment, but, taking the wig with his left hand, dealt the servant a buffet with the right that sent him reeling backwards out of the door. The worthy patriarch of letters then gravely begged them to be seated, and delivered a long and dignified harangue. Unless it owes something to the younger dramatist, the scene strikes one as the most dramatic of his works.

The man who had succeeded to Gottsched's vacated throne was Gellert, who exercised a very great influence on the youth of the University, and, in Goethe's opinion, might have exercised a still greater if he had cared to do so. Goethe attended his lectures on literature, in which, to his surprise, he never heard the names of such living writers as Klopstock, Wieland, or Lessing, and also his private class (*Praktikum*), in which questions of composition and style received a more detailed treatment. There he delivered to his young disciples jeremiads in which he warned them against poetry; he only cared for prose essays, and always corrected them first. Verses he only treated as something to be endured, and Goethe's prose even found little favour in his eyes. The young poet let his imagination play:

his essays took the form of novels; the subjects were passionate, and often went beyond the limits of mere prose; but no praise could he extort from the cold master, who went through his exercises like the rest, making his corrections in red ink, and here and there adding some moral reflection.

All the same, Goethe did feel his influence at the time, and his Leipsic letters are exercises in the epistolary style of Gellert, to whose exhortations also it was due that he devoted at that time an attention to his writing, which resulted in a permanent improvement of his hitherto careless hand. Yet, whatever his moral excellences and the general benevolence of his character, there was nothing great about Gellert either as poet or as man, and though he might teach Goethe something about versification, it was not in him to give a real impulse and direction to the genius of the youth whom he apparently so little understood.

The one man who might have had as great an influence on him personally as he did indirectly through his works was Lessing, and Lessing Goethe might have seen in Leipsic but for a foolish whim, which led him not to take any steps to see the great man, but to leave their meeting to chance. Fortune was not kind, and he never saw the one who was his only real forerunner in the cause of true literature.

fellow-lodger at Leipsic, a cobbler and Mark Tapley in real life, whom Goethe already knew well from his letters, the arrival of which were always hailed with joy. Goethe found him a cheerful man, whose one condition of happiness was incessant work, and full of practical philosophy and unconscious wisdom. Possibly the simple household in which he temporarily found himself and the sturdy Teutonism of his host were not without influence on his mood, and helped to make him view with ready, sympathetic eyes the famous pictures of the Dutch School which he found in the gallery. However that may be, the Italian masters did not appeal to him with the same directness, and, confining himself, as always, to his own direct observation and intuition, he did not attempt to force an interest that did not arise spontaneously. This appreciation of the directness and truth of the Netherlanders founded during his Dresden visit never left him even in the days of most pronounced classicism.

Enriched with a wealth of impressions, he returned to Leipsic, and the account he gave of his movements to his astonished friends was received with amused incredulity, as the mask of some secret which they vainly endeavoured to discover.

Art we see, then, occupying much of his time and thought. "Thus, the University," he says,

"where I neglected the objects of my family, and, indeed, my own, was to confirm me in that in which I was destined to find the greatest satisfaction of my life; and the impression of those places in which I received such powerful, stimulating influences has always remained very dear and precious to me. The old Pleissenburg, the rooms of the Academy, but above all Oeser's dwelling, and no less the Winkler and Richter collections, are still vividly present before me."*

Meanwhile Leipsic had been the scene of a genuine passion. During the fair of 1766 a fellow-townsman, Johann Georg Schlosser, who in 1773 married his sister Cornelia, arrived at Leipsic, and took up his lodgings with the wine-dealer Schönkopf, who lived at No. 79 in the Brühl, in a house which still exists, though it has been almost entirely rebuilt.

Schlosser was ten years older than Goethe, a man of settled views and strong, decided character, who had at the same time a wide acquaintance with what was best in most of the principal modern literatures. To him Goethe, who was then far from happy, owing to the disillusionment which a closer acquaintance with the great men of the University had brought in its train, and the chaos to which his own mind had been reduced

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book VIII., Weimar edition, vol. xxvii., p. 163.

by the uprooting of the convictions which he had brought with him from Frankfort, without the substitution of anything better in their place, and who may possibly have been a little home-sick, too, attached himself with whole-heart confidence and devotion.

During Schlosser's stay in Leipsic he dined daily at Schönkopf's table, and was introduced by him to the circle which gathered there, and continued to frequent the house even after his departure. There was, however, by now another attraction besides the learned interests of the company, for his heart had been captivated by the charms of the daughter of the house, Anna Katharina, known as Käthchen, who appears in Goethe's own story as Ännchen. Most of Goethe's youthful passions were for girls older than himself, and Käthchen had the advantage of him by three years. We will give his own account of the story, though we might remark in advance that it appears probable that in much of the teasing which the autobiography, and also the *Laune des Verliebten*, in which the love-affair is incorporated, attribute to him, he was rather the passive than the active agent.

"My earlier tender feeling for Gretchen I had now transferred to an Ännchen, of whom I can say no more than that she was young, pretty, merry, and so charming that she well deserved to

be enthroned for a time in the sanctuary of the heart and to receive that adoration which it is often more pleasant to give than to receive. I saw her daily without hindrance; she helped in the preparation of the dishes I ate; in the evening, at any rate, she brought the wine I drank; and our select mid-day table was sufficient guarantee that the little house, which except at fair-time received but few guests, fully deserved its good name. Neither desire nor occasion were lacking for many a conversation. But as she had very little opportunity or possibility of leaving the house, amusements grew rather scarce all the same. We sang the songs of Zachariä, played Duke Michel von Krüger, in which a rolled-up handkerchief had to take the place of the nightingale, and so for a time things went on fairly well. But, because the more innocent such relationships are, the less variety they offer in the long-run, I was attacked by that evil passion which leads us to seek entertainment in the torture of the beloved one, and to try her devotion with capricious and tyrannical whims. The ill-humour at the failure of my poetical attempts, and the apparent impossibility of arriving at inner clearness with regard both to this and to other matters which troubled me, I thought I could vent on her, because she really loved me deeply, and did all she could to please me. By groundless and foolish jealousies I spoilt both for

or a poem, and so have done with it, in order both to correct my conceptions of external objects and also to attain to inward calm. This gift," he continues, "was for no one more necessary than for me, as my nature was perpetually throwing me from one extreme into the other. All my works, therefore, are fragments of a great confession, to complete which this little book is a bold attempt."*

Just as many of his Leipsic *Lieder* enshrined some actual emotion or reflection, and were based upon some foundation of fact, so now he turned his relationship to Käthchen into poetic form.

"Already before, I had in many intervals felt the badness of my behaviour plainly enough. I was really sorry for the poor child when I saw her so needlessly troubled. I pictured to myself her position and mine, and in contrast the contented state of another pair belonging to our society, so often and in such detail, that at last I could not help treating the subject dramatically, as a painful, and at the same time instructive atonement."†

This was his first drama, *Die Laune des Verliebten* —"The Capricious Lover," as it might be called—a pastoral in a single act, written in the French style and in the French dramatic verse, the

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book VII., Weimar edition, vol. xxvii., p. 109 *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*, Weimar edition, vol. xxvii., p. 112.

Alexandrine. In it two happy lovers are contrasted with another pair, who are made unhappy by the caprice and jealousy of the man, who is at last cured by being led by a friend to kiss her, and so arouse in turn the jealousy of his mistress. The moral is the same—namely, the common weakness of humanity—as in the other drama of the Leipsic time, *Die Mitschuldigen* (The Fellow-Sinners), only that there the picture is a gloomier one, and is no less than the lesson of pessimistic tolerance, a strange conclusion for a youth of seventeen. This, again, was, even if not so directly, an embodiment of personal experiences.

"In my adventure with Gretchen, and through the consequences of it, I had early gained an insight into the strange labyrinths by which civic society is undermined. Religion, morals, law, rank, circumstances, and habit all govern only the surface of the life of a town. The streets, with their rows of splendid houses, are kept clean, and everyone behaves himself while in them with all propriety; but within things are often only the more desolate, and a polished exterior is often only a thin coat glossing over a crumbling wall, which collapses overnight with an effect all the more terrible for breaking rudely in upon a calm."*

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book VII., Weimar edition, vol. xxvii., p. 113.

This pessimistic view of society Leipsic had not apparently succeeded in improving, and, suffering under the shock of one whose first faith has been shattered, he seems to have at this time doubted the whole fabric of that society which had seemed to him so fair so long as he knew it only from without.

The play at first contained only one act, but it was afterwards enlarged to three, and in that form republished in 1787. Both these early dramas show the realistic spirit which actuated Goethe's work—the impulse to seek a footing in reality, neither blinking nor idealizing facts, but using them as his starting-point in the search for truth.

Besides these two plays, and several others which scarcely got beyond their exposition, Goethe wrote at Leipsic a number of *Lieder*. The poems which he had brought with him from Frankfort he had burnt in a fit of gloom and discouragement before he had been in Leipsic six months. His favourite modern poets, and also some of his own productions, which he recited without naming their author, were criticised unsparingly by Frau Böhme and others, and for a time he despaired of his own taste and poetical talent.

However, the poetic impulse still continued to stir him. He gained more confidence in his own

genius, and it was one of the greatest gains of the Leipsic time that he began to be fully conscious of his poet's mission, and to feel that failure and success depended upon himself and the presence or absence of native inborn genius, and not on the little rules and regulations of a Gellert or anyone else.

Yet the poems of this time, in spite of great ease and readiness of expression, had not yet attained to that directness and mastery which was first apparent in the poems of his Strasburg days.

We have two collections of poems of the time. The one, which was only discovered and published in 1896, is a small manuscript volume of lyrics, inspired by Käthchen, and bearing the title *Annette*, the interest of which is greater than its intrinsic poetic value. The other, the *Leipziger Liederbuch*, which contained a number of little songs set to music by his friend Breitkopf, though not printed till after his return to Frankfort, and though containing some old Frankfort songs in a new form, is devoted almost exclusively to the praise of Käthchen and to the Leipsic life. Only a few of them were later on taken up into the collections of his works, and those only with considerable alterations. Though containing more pieces of merit than the former, it is marked, too, by artificiality, and the expression of sentiments

which are rather conventional than personal. Occasional poems also were written, flattering and unflattering, dedicated to his fellow-students and friends, to actresses, and, not least, to the professors and other dignitaries of Leipsic, some of which brought him into very bad odour with the authorities, who took his daring flights more seriously than they deserved.

Before leaving the Leipsic days, mention must be made of the principal friends who exercised an important influence upon him during these years of development and formation. Of Schlosser, his future brother-in-law, we have already spoken. Another Frankfort friend, who arrived at Leipsic in 1766, at the time of his deepest depression and discouragement, was Johann Adam Horn, who for his diminutive size was nicknamed Hörnchen, and whose lively nature and merry good-humour did much to shake Goethe out of his brooding melancholy.

But the man who had most influence upon him was Ernst Wolfgang Behrisch, a man many years his senior. Behrisch was in Leipsic as tutor of a young nobleman, a post which he lost owing to his known friendship with Goethe, who at the time enjoyed a reputation which he fortunately did not deserve. He was a whimsical fellow, remarkable before all as a connoisseur in the art of being busy without doing anything, but full of

odd quirks and turns that made him an ever-entertaining companion. Yet under this external levity there lay keen insight and no mean critical faculty, and to his moderating and restraining influence and healthy cynicism Goethe owed a debt similar to that which Merck laid upon him a few years later. Their friendship continued unabated, and their correspondence was only ended by the death of Behrisch in 1809.

The end of Goethe's Leipsic years was darkened by severe and dangerous illness. One night he woke with a violent hæmorrhage, and for several days hung between life and death. With his recovery he experienced a twofold inward satisfaction, for not only did he feel a lightness of spirits to which he had long been a stranger, but the solicitude and care of his nearest friends, and of others whom he had imagined quite indifferent to his welfare, and even of some who had less than no occasion to love him, moved him deeply, and appear to have done something to counteract the gloomy view of his fellow-men which he had formed on such limited data.

His recovery was slow, but in September he was well enough to set out once more for his native city. He had left Frankfort full of hope and in the exuberant spirits of youth; he returned ill and discouraged, with the consciousness of not having fulfilled the objects his father had in view

in sending him, and not very sure how far he had succeeded in those which he had himself elected to pursue. Yet if he returned a sadder, he was also a wiser man, and he had in those three short years made a not inconsiderable advance in the attainment of that experience which it became his life's task to achieve. And, above all, he returned with the settled conviction that, in spite of the worthlessness of much that he had already written, and in spite of his many failures, there dwelt in him a poetic gift that depended on no mere imitation, and would owe its fate to no school and no rule, but by inward growth and development must work its own salvation.

CHAPTER IV

HOME AGAIN

IT is an interesting picture Goethe gives us of the return to the home of his childhood after his first real absence. No wonder that the thought of returning, and of the various welcomes he would receive, threw him into a state of strained, and by no means wholly pleasant anticipation.

"The nearer I approached my native town, the more seriously did I reflect under what circumstances and in what hopes and prospects I had left home, and it was a very depressing feeling that I was now returning like a shipwrecked mariner. But as I had not, after all, anything especially great to reproach myself with, I managed to remain fairly calm, yet all the same the welcome was not free from agitation. The great vivacity of my temperament, increased and excited by illness, caused a passionate scene. I may have looked worse than I myself knew, for I had not consulted a mirror for a long time, and who does

not get used to his own appearance? Suffice it to say that it was tacitly agreed that many communications should only be made by degrees, and that time should be given before all for physical and mental recuperation.

"My sister at once became very intimate, and, as formerly from her letters, I now learnt more exactly and in detail the circumstances and position of the family. My father had after my departure given my sister the whole advantage of his didactic proclivities; and the house being fully isolated, in all the security of peace, and vacated even by tenants, he had cut off almost all means of intercourse with the outside world and of recreation. French, Italian, English she had to work at in turn, while at the same time he insisted on her practising the clavier for a great part of the day. Writing, too, could not be neglected, and I had already noticed that he directed her correspondence with me, and had transmitted to me his maxims through her pen. My sister was always a problematic character, the strangest compound of severity and tenderness, of wilfulness and complaisance; which qualities were now united, now divided, by will and affection. Thus she had, in a manner that seemed terrible to me, hardened her heart against her father, whom she would not pardon for having these years robbed her of, or spoiled, so many an innocent pleasure, and of

whose excellent qualities she would not recognise a single one."*

No wonder that this sister, to whose nature, with all its many contradictions, love was an absolute necessity, turned the whole flood of her thwarted affections upon the handsome, clever brother, who made an even greater appeal to her in his present state of illness and depression, and that she devoted all her time to spoiling him, and trying in every way to raise him from his melancholy.

The father was now in the possession of such happiness as he knew; the time-table of the little private school of which he was the despotic director was now no longer disturbed from without; such time as could be spared from the education of his daughter he devoted to the writing of his travels, and the playing, or rather the tuning, of his lute. The one thing that would not fit into its pigeon-hole was this strange creature of a son, who would not let himself be made into a respectable advocate in the proper and traditional way, but insisted on growing and developing according to some principle which did not enter into his scheme of things.

In this rigorous establishment the bright, merry little mother was scarcely more happy than her daughter. The cares of the simple household

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book VIII., Weimar edition, vol. xxvii., p. 196 *et seq.*

were not sufficient to occupy her lively temperament, and the outside interest and stimulus which she required she had now found in religion. Among her many devout friends the most remarkable was Susanna Katharina von Klettenberg, to whom Goethe raised a monument in the *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* (Confessions of a Beautiful Soul), which he incorporated in *Wilhelm Meister*, and which was not only founded upon the experiences of her life, but also owed much to conversations with her and to her letters and manuscripts.

Already in 1765 she had had some influence on him, and helped to inspire the writing of his poem *Über die Höllenfahrt Christi*, and now when he returned in a condition of physical and mental depression, she found him in a state of special receptivity for religious impressions, and won, for a time at any rate, his sympathy for the views and aspirations of the pietistic circle to which she belonged.

But not only did he get from her some insight into the mystical views and writings of the Moravians, but it was to her that he owed that initiation into the study of alchemy which bore fruit later in *Faust*. At this time, too, were laid the foundations of those scientific studies and researches which assumed such a large importance in his later life.

Meantime his illness continued; he had frequent

relapses, an ulcer on the neck was very threatening and very obstinate, while his final trouble was a painful derangement of the digestive organs. When at last he was cured by a Moravian doctor of their circle by the administration of a strange potion, it strengthened still further for the time the tendency to bury himself in the investigation of mysterious arts.

The return to Frankfort had, meantime, by no means led to the forgetting of old Leipsic friends; on the contrary, Frankfort seems at first to have appeared an exile after that city of light and learning, and Frankfort manners and mode of life an unpleasant contrast to those of the enlightened Saxon town. He corresponded with Oeser, whom he addressed as his "dearest teacher," and also with his daughter Friederike. Greetings are sent to old friends, while he both writes to Käthchen and sends her messages through others.

As time went on, health and spirits began to mend; concerts and theatres were visited once more. At this period, too, and not before the Leipsic time, as is stated in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, all the merry parties and picnics took place, which kept the youthful exile in a constant round of gaieties.

So the months of this long Frankfort holiday passed by, which, though one of the least happy periods of his life, yet was of value as a time of

recuperation and concentration after the first wild burst of life at Leipsic, and of preparation for the more serious studies which were to follow. As his strength returned his father began to grow impatient for the continuation of the course which he had mapped out for him, and in the spring of 1770 he set out for the University which had been chosen for the completion of his legal studies.

CHAPTER V

STRASBURG

GOETHE arrived in Strasburg on April 2, 1770, and left it on his twenty-second birthday, August 28, 1771, and these sixteen months are among the most interesting of his life, and probably the most important for his mental development. Though not half the length of his stay in Leipsic, this must be regarded as his real experience of University life. Even when he left Leipsic, he was only of about the age at which an English school-boy generally enters the University to-day, and came fresh from home with a very limited experience; now he was entering early manhood, and was already a man in experience. It is true that he did not here any more than at Leipsic pursue whole-heartedly and exclusively the professional studies which were his nominal aim, yet at the same time he was becoming more conscious of himself and the tendency of his own powers, and was no longer like a ship without a rudder, as he might almost be said to have been

at Leipsic. Moreover, during this second University time he had the good fortune to make friends whose intellectual aims and activities were more nearly akin to his own, and one of whom, Herder, did more than any other to reduce to conscious plan what had been up till then merely the instinctive direction of his mind.

Strasburg was, on Goethe's arrival there, still in fact a German University, though the town had been for almost a century under French dominion. The first thing he sallied forth to see was the famous cathedral, the magnificent Gothic structure of which made the greatest impression on him.

At the table where he dined, at No. 13, Krämergasse, which was kept by two maiden ladies named Lauth, all the guests were Germans, and not only avoided the speaking of French, but emphasized their German nationality, while French literature was held in slight esteem. Gothic architecture and German literature both increased their hold upon him, and thus the culture he won from the nominally French city was essentially Teutonic.

The life of the Alsatian capital was a very gay one, and under its influence the restoration of his health and spirits was completed. The pietistic tendency which he had brought with him from Frankfort maintained itself for a time; but we

soon see him throwing off all moody introspection and entering eagerly into the life around him, taking dancing lessons, and making all the changes which were necessary in order to fit him to play a part in the society into which he was introduced.

Of his personal appearance at the time we have the account of Jung Stilling, the self-educated charcoal-burner, who soon afterwards joined the company at table in the Krämergasse: "About twenty people dined at this table, and they came in one after another. There was one especially, with large clear eyes, magnificent brow, and fine build, who came confidently into the room, and attracted the attention of Troost and Stilling. The former said to the latter, 'That must be an exceptional man.' Stilling assented, but believed they might both have to endure a good deal of annoyance from him, taking him for a wild fellow. This he concluded from the student's free and independent manner; but Stilling was much mistaken. Meantime they learnt that this splendid fellow was called Herr Goethe."*

This meeting was the opening of a friendship between the simple-minded, pietistic dreamer and the brilliant wealthy youth, surely one of the

* *Heinrich Stillings Lebensgeschichte.* J. H. Jung (genannt Stilling). Sämmtliche Werke, vol. i., p. 341 *et seq.* Stuttgart, 1857.

strangest combinations in history. Instead of a tormentor, Stilling found in the formidable-looking "Herr Goethe" a generous champion and defender.

Another member of the company who greatly attracted Goethe was the actuary Salzmann, who sat at the head of the table — a grave middle-aged man of quiet and dignified bearing. Himself a bit of an old dandy, he was possessed of much worldly wisdom and experience, and gave the grateful youth some excellent practical advice, and introductions which helped to make his life more agreeable. Once more we have an instance of Goethe's catholicity in the choice of his friends, as also of that preference for the society of his elders which was characteristic of his early life.

Among younger members of the company must be mentioned Lerse, whose frank, open, manly character particularly attracted him, and whose name and friendship he has commemorated in *Götz von Berlichingen;* the poet Lenz; and Weyland, who later introduced him to the Brion family at Sesenheim.

The majority of the party were medical students, and we are not surprised to find Goethe's ready universality of interest fired by this new influence. From a notebook of the time, which gives an account of his studies and occupations, we learn

that, besides a most wide and varied course of general reading, he regularly attended lectures on medical subjects, while he was also devoting himself to chemistry, electricity, and chromatic subjects.

He had begun at first the study of his own subject jurisprudence, as we gather from letters, with some zeal, which, however, soon abated before the superior attractions of other more congenial branches of learning. It suffered still more when, in September of the same year, he made in Herder perhaps the most important acquaintance of his life, and his thoughts were powerfully diverted into new channels.

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) came first to Strasburg as tutor of the young Prince of Holstein-Eutin, but, after parting from his pupil, stayed on for the whole of the winter 1770-71, in order to undergo a course of treatment for an affection of the eye from which he was then suffering. His arrival caused great excitement in the circle, as Goethe himself informs us: "Our society, on hearing of his presence, was at once greatly desirous of coming into a closer relationship with him, and the good fortune of doing so fell to my lot quite unexpectedly and accidentally. I had gone to the Gasthof zum Geist in order to call upon an important stranger. At the very foot of the stairs I found a man who

was also about to ascend, and whom I took for a minister."*

With powdered hair, dressed in black, and wearing in addition a long black silk cloak, he presented a strange but at the same time pleasing and distinguished appearance, and Goethe recognised him at once for the famous arrival, and approached him in a way that showed both his recognition and esteem. Herder, too, appears to have been attracted by the younger man, who, although he was, of course, unknown to him, seems to have aroused his interest, and before they parted Goethe had asked and received the permission to call upon him in his own quarters. He did so, and at first Herder, both by his fame and his own personality, seems to have exercised a great fascination over him, and to have won his unlimited confidence. It was not long, however, before the less pleasing side of his character, which later became so pronounced, began to show itself, and kept his young admirer in a constant state of alternation between repulsion and attraction.

Herder was only five years older than Goethe, but he was at that time far more in advance of him in experience of men and books than in years. His was a very different nature from Goethe's

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book X., Weimar edition, vol. xxvii., p. 303.

— without its heights and its depths, and for being smaller the more quickly matured. Thus, being precisely conscious of his aims, and pursuing them undisturbed by any of those stirrings of the very depths of feeling and consciousness by which more elemental natures are retarded, as by a kind of natural convulsion, he had attained at a comparatively early age a certain completeness, and in this respect was the superior of the rough-hewn Titan, whose virtual admission of inferiority he seems to have himself regarded as only just and fitting. In that, too, Goethe showed himself the greater of the two, that he recognised the excellences of the other, and assimilated, as everywhere, something for himself; while the genius of Herder did not permit him to recognise duly gifts still more extraordinary.

While Herder's malady confined him to his room, Goethe was the chief among those whose visits helped to fill the time of imprisonment. Their intercourse was not always of a pleasant nature for the younger man, for Herder did not refrain from venting his ill-humours upon him, nor from making at his expense jokes which were not always in the best of taste. Goethe, however, characteristically regarded all such unpleasantness as more than compensated by the intellectual gain by which they were accompanied. So we read in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where, after speaking of

what he had to endure in this way, he adds that "there was no day which was not most fruitful in instruction for me. I learnt to know poetry from quite another side and in quite a different sense from before, and in one which strongly appealed to me. Hebrew poetry . . . popular poetry . . . the oldest records as poetry, bore testimony that poetry itself is a common gift of all nations, and not the private inheritance of a few refined and cultured men."*

Herder was himself influenced by the writings of that eccentric genius Hamann (1730-1788), the "Magus of the North," with whose writings he now made Goethe acquainted, and they too made, though but half understood, a powerful, if somewhat vague impression upon the young poet.

To Herder Goethe owed it that the world of literature now became for him a wider one, in which quite different figures loomed largely upon the horizon. He learnt to regard poetry as the natural outgrowth of the human soul, arising spontaneously from instinct and feeling, like the song of the birds, and that it must be judged by the standard of nature and by no artificial literary canons. So, too, he learned to look for the greatest achievements in the field of literature in those periods when literature had arisen most

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book X., Weimar edition, vol. xxvii., p. 313.

spontaneously and most free from all artificial trammels, and to see the noblest fruits of poetry in the works of those men who had written out of the rude fulness of their own hearts, rather than in the more polished productions of their successors and imitators. The Bible, Homer, Ossian, Shakespeare became for him now the world's great books—mighty outgrowths of a universal spirit of poetry above which they towered, but from which they derived their strength, and which alone made them possible. Of them all perhaps it was Shakespeare who affected him most powerfully, and his influence on the works of the following years is clearly marked.

Another English work the acquaintance with which he owed to his widely-read Mentor was Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, which had appeared four years before, and the idyllic charm of which at once captivated his fancy. To that book was, perhaps, in some measure due the part Goethe played in the idyll which is for us for ever connected with the Strasburg time, and the recital of which forms one of the most beautiful parts of his own story of his early life.

Fresh from Goldsmith's world, he was introduced by his Alsatian friend Weyland to the family of Pastor Brion of Sesenheim, a village some twenty miles from Strasburg, and his imagination seems at once to have seen himself and them

in the terms of that romance, and to have woven fact and fancy into one attractive whole.

The parsonage was already more than 200 years old, and with its open yard and the big barn, which alone remains of the buildings of Goethe's day, was like a picturesque old farm-house, rather below than above the Alsatian standard of the day. To-day a new *Pfarrhaus* of very modern appearance replaces the hospitable if homely dwelling which Goethe has immortalized; while the church in which, at Friederike's side, even the pastor's somewhat dry discourse seemed endurable is soon to lose the form he knew.

The father was a kind and simple-hearted man, between whom and the young student there at once arose a mutual regard, and there were two unmarried daughters, of whom the younger, Friederike, at once captivated the poet's fancy. She was slender and graceful, with merry blue eyes and a small nose, slightly tip-tilted, which only served to give a still more piquant expression to her face. Her heavy fair hair was worn in two long plaits, and this, together with the old national costume of short round skirt, white bodice, and black apron, gave to her appearance something on the borderland between peasant and townswoman. Altogether we cannot wonder that Goethe felt the seductiveness of this idyll in real life, and

made the graceful country parson's daughter the first real mistress of his heart.

One of the capricious whims which were characteristic of him in his youth had prompted him to come disguised as a poor theological student, but this assumed rôle became under the circumstances distasteful to him. It was in his own character that he stayed on and gave himself up to all the delights of Friederike's society, and before long he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was not indifferent to her. A mutual understanding was soon arrived at, and both enjoyed under the most favourable conditions all the delights of that happy period when each is confident of the other's love, and no thoughts of future complications, and no intrusion of the hard facts of life, have yet come to disturb the first unreasoning happiness. Like all other stirring events of his life, his love to Friederike was the inspiration of several of his songs, and among the poems of the time, of which some ten are directly addressed to her, are some of Goethe's best lyrics, showing in their naturalness and spontaneity and absence of all literary affectation the great gain in insight and poetic mastery which he had achieved.

The first visit to Sesenheim took place in the autumn of 1770, and during the following winter visits to Friederike's home formed the chief interruptions to his studies and his intercourse with

Herder. With the latter's departure in the spring, and the return of the fine weather, they became still more frequent, and for a time, amid a round of country pleasures and in a setting of the pleasant Alsatian scenery, nothing seemed wanting to make the idyll complete. The two appear to have been treated as recognised lovers; the course of true love seemed to be running very smooth. Amid the surroundings and in company with the friends of her childhood, Friederike showed to advantage; there was nothing to give the son of the wealthy Frankfort burgher a sense of unfitness where he, rather than she, was incongruous.

The thought that he must soon depart and take up again a very different life may have arisen at times like a faint cloud on the horizon, but there was no serious disturbance of their mutual happiness till July, when the mother and daughters paid a visit to Strasburg. Here, amid other companions and in other surroundings, the simplicity and naïveté, which at Sesenheim had appeared only piquant and charming, may have served to emphasize the difference between the life and fortunes of the lovers, and to impress upon Goethe how unsuited this country girl was for the future he would have to offer her.

What the reasons were that led to the final parting is not quite clear. It may have been that his love had cooled; it may be that returning

reflection had shown him their unsuitability for one another; it may have been a half-unconscious feeling that he had not yet run his course, and that he could not lay fetters upon himself; or it may have been some reason quite foreign to these, and to which we have no clue. However it be, when he paid his last visit to Sesenheim, after taking his degree and when about to return to Frankfort, it was felt to be the end, though he only wrote the final farewell after his return home. There was an affecting scene, and he tells us how the tears stood in her eyes as he gave her his hand from his horse, while he himself was deeply moved.

Nor did the painful impression of the parting and of the grief he had given Friederike quickly leave him, for though, perhaps, in his own account there may be some poetical exaggeration, and his guilt and her grief may be both made more tragically acute, yet there is no doubt that he long retained a feeling of remorse for the sorrow he had, however unwillingly, brought upon the gentle, simple girl. In several of the works of the following years we find a Friederike, and the Maria of *Götz*, the Marie of *Clavigo*, the Clärchen of *Egmont*, and the Gretchen of *Faust*, may be regarded as a confession of his own regret at what had happened.

Whatever may have been his own feelings in the matter, neither Friederike nor her family appear to have judged him harshly, and when,

eight years afterwards, on the way to Switzerland, he passed a night at Sesenheim, he was received with every kindness by all, and even went over with Friederike in memory the scenes they had passed through together years before. She died in 1813, unmarried, it is true, though that she lived broken-hearted all those years seems a somewhat forced interpretation of such facts as we possess.

In August, 1771, Goethe returned to Frankfort, this time as a Doctor of Law, and in a more successful guise in every way than on his return from Leipsic three years before. At Strasburg, even if he had not devoted himself whole-heartedly to his legal studies, he had, at any rate, formally completed them; and although he returned with a mind not free from oppression, yet he was both mentally and physically sound and strong.

CHAPTER VI

STORM AND STRESS

IN his native city Goethe remained till May of the following year, practising his profession, though without enthusiasm, and finding relief from the unsettled state of mind into which he was thrown by this conflict of duty and inclination, and by the want of congenial society in Frankfort, in frequent wanderings up and down the country, and in poems in which this most stormy time of his youth is reflected. These somewhat erratic journeyings of his won for him the name of "The Wanderer," and of the songs of this period the *Wanderers Sturmlied* is the most remarkable, and gives us the clearest picture of the restless mental condition in which he then was.

In Frankfort itself his only real friends and allies were the two brothers Schlosser—one of whom, Johann Georg, afterwards married his sister—and Cornelia herself, who better than anyone else appreciated his ideals and sympathized

with his literary aspirations. In the neighbouring town of Darmstadt, however, he found what he missed at home. There the Landgravine Caroline had formed a literary circle, which counted among its members Caroline Flachsland, later the wife of Herder, and of which the guiding spirit was Johann Heinrich Merck, a man of thirty, who was at the time an official in the War Department of that place.

Merck was a man of clear critical insight, with an experience of the world which made him suspicious of all extremes, and, though not himself possessed of very great creative power, seems to have exercised a great stimulating influence on all those with whom he came in contact. On Goethe he had a great and wholesome influence, at a time when he was inclined to carry revolt against artistic law to the point of license, and Goethe has been by no means sparing in acknowledgment of the debt he owed him.

Stimulating friendship and criticism, together with some sharp first-hand experience of life, had at length fully awakened his creative genius, and this period is one of great productive activity.

Shakespeare had opened up a new world to him, and it was partly the enthusiasm which his genius had aroused that made him see in the story of a knight of the Middle Ages, Götz von Berlichingen, a subject in which to clothe in a

GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

living garb the whole spirit of the turbulent sixteenth century. He saw the subject with the new vision which the study of Shakespeare had given him, and after carrying the idea for some time in his mind, he at last threw off the first sketch in the autumn of 1771, in closest consultation with his sister Cornelia, in the short space of six weeks.

Very interesting is his own account of how, after long discussing the subject with her, he was at last driven, by her well-meant scepticism as to its ever getting beyond the mere conception, to set to work. Without any scheme or plan he wrote away, reading to her at night what he had produced, and so, stimulated by her frank criticism, and surprised himself to see the work growing beneath his hands, he carried it rapidly and without interruption to a conclusion.

As *Die Geschichte Gottfriedens von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand, dramatisiert,* he sent it to Merck, whose criticisms were very sensible and kindly, and to Herder, whose comments were very unfriendly and severe, and who made it the occasion of bestowing upon its author not a little ridicule, and, after his wont, conferring upon him new nicknames.

However, he was not discouraged. He had himself only regarded this as a first draft, capable of indefinite alteration and improvement, and of

that remodelling and the vast importance of the work both for the literature of Germany and as a decisive factor in Goethe's own literary career we shall have to speak in due place.

After this short time at home, which had yet seen the inception of the work which laid the foundations of his literary fame, Goethe once more left his native city for the prosecution of his studies, going to complete his legal preparation by experience in the *Reichskammergericht*, the Imperial Court of Justice, which was situated in the little city of Wetzlar-on-the-Lahn.

There, where the quiet little town itself was in strange contrast to its dignity as legal capital of the Holy Roman Empire, and only served by its very peacefulness and provinciality to throw into stronger relief the varied society of students, officials, and embassies, gathered from far and wide, Goethe soon found congenial company.

Among the younger spirits a society had been initiated under all the forms of a knightly order, the members of which tried to revive in a measure the spirit of old days of chivalry, and of this society Goethe became a prominent member, bearing the title of his hero Götz. Even in this fanciful way the old theme was kept ever fresh in his thoughts.

For us the Wetzlar days are before all connected with the thought of *Werther*, and to trace

to their beginnings the circumstances which led to the production of that world-famed story we must speak of the formation of a friendship which was the turning-point of this period, as a man's friendship was for more than one epoch of Goethe's life.

This friend was Kestner, Secretary to the Hanoverian Legation. As was usually the case with the men who most attracted Goethe in his youth, Kestner was considerably his senior, being thirty-two years of age, and his steady, conscientious, settled character was in striking contrast to the impulsive nature of the youthful genius. It is interesting to see how Goethe appeared in the eyes of such a man, and Kestner's description gives the best picture we possess of him at this period of his life.

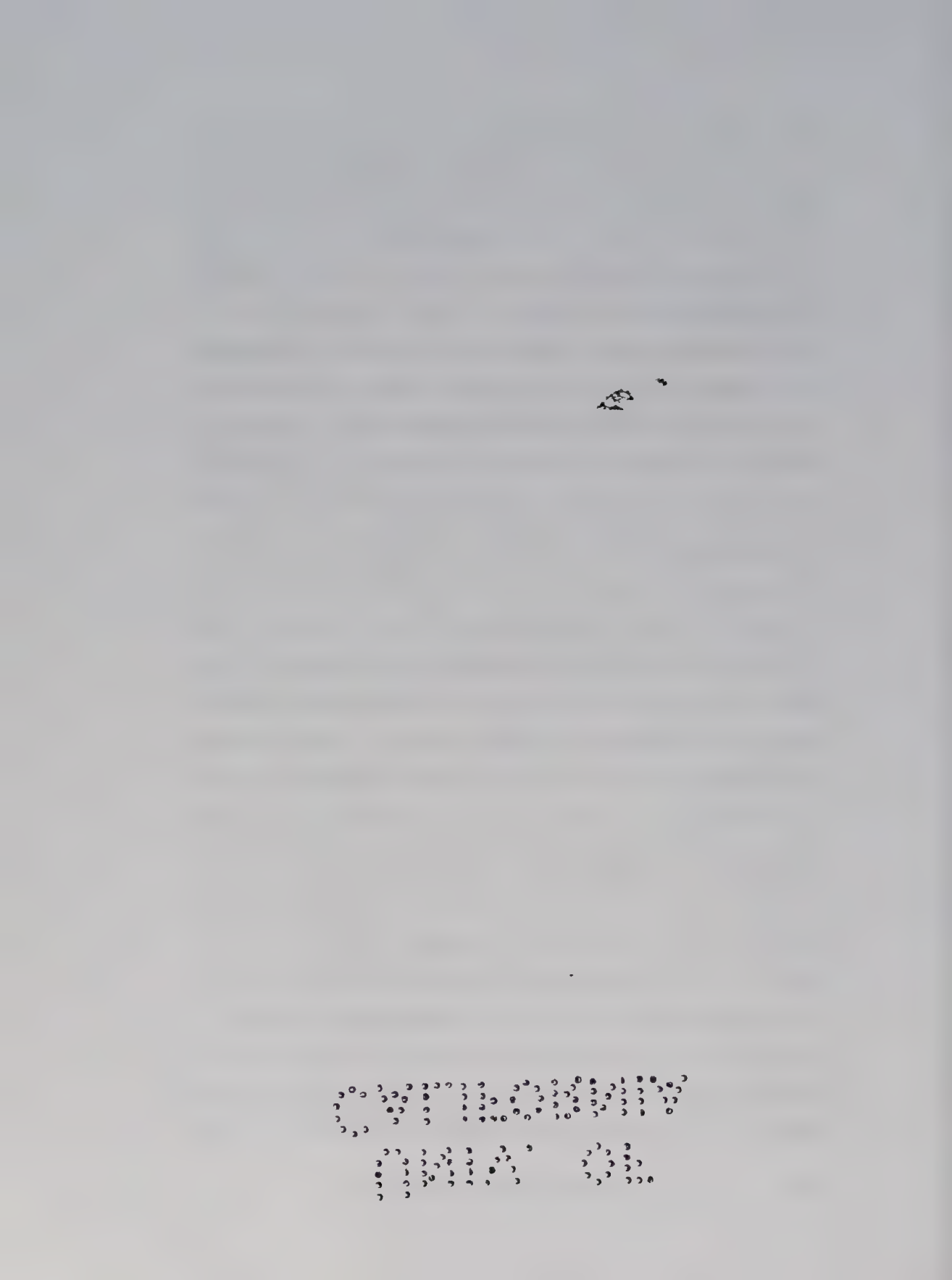
"He has great talents, and is a true genius and man of character; possesses an extraordinarily vivid imagination, for which reason he mostly expresses himself in images and similes. . . . He is violent in all his emotions, and has nevertheless often much power over himself. His sentiments are lofty; being little under the dominion of prejudice, he acts as he thinks fit, without troubling himself whether it pleases others, is the fashion, or the correct thing. All restraint is hateful to him. He loves children, and understands them wonderfully. He is odd, and has in his manner and in externals much that might make

him unpleasant; but with children, women, and many others, he is, for all that, a favourite. For the other sex he has a very great esteem. . . . He is a striver after truth, but thinks more of its feeling than its demonstration. He has already done much, knows much, and has read much, but thought and reasoned still more. He has made the study of belles-lettres his principal business, or, rather, all study, with the sole exception of the so-called 'bread-studies.'"

Kestner introduced Goethe to the family of one of the officials of the Teutonic Order, named Buff, who lived in the *Teutsche Haus*, which was then the property of the knights of that Order, and which is still to be seen in the main street of Wetzlar to-day.

At a ball Goethe met for the first time the second daughter, Charlotte, familiarly known as Lotte, by whom he was at this first meeting very much attracted, only to find later that she was already as good as engaged to his friend.

He became a regular visitor at the *Teutsche Haus*, and there he learnt to know Lotte in the character of a mother to her ten younger brothers and sisters. Hers was an exceptionally entire character. Not only was she, with her masses of fair hair, bright blue eyes, and graceful figure, probably the most beautiful of all those who captivated Goethe's heart, but she possessed a



rare mental endowment, which made her equally susceptible to the ideal and beautiful, and capable of grappling with the necessities of practical life. It seems to have been a most genuine compound of passion, sympathy, admiration, and honest respect, which went to make up Goethe's ever-increasing love.

Lotte knew of his love, and he did not conceal from Kestner that he loved "with him." For a time all seemed to go well, and all appeared to think that this most unconventional triangular arrangement could continue indefinitely. On August 28, which, by a strange coincidence, was both Goethe's and Kestner's birthday, the double celebration took place at Lotte's house, but after that matters appear to have advanced rapidly to a climax. The last meeting was on September 10 in the *Teutsche Haus*, and then the conversation between Goethe and Lotte turned on the subject of suicide, on which he had been for some time brooding. Their conversation seems altogether to have taken a very morbid turn, and the effect on Goethe's already overwrought mind was such as to convince him that the situation was for him no longer bearable, and that the only course was flight. On September 11, without a word of warning, and sending only a short and agitated letter of farewell to Kestner, with an enclosure for Lotte, he suddenly departed, probably in

pursuance of the advice of Merck, whom he had consulted in his trouble.

Such was the story which later, together with an admixture of fancy, and coloured by Goethe's vivid and dramatic imagination, became the property of the whole civilized world.

That things were at the time by no means tuned to a tragic note, even on Goethe's part, and certainly not on Lotte's, all the facts go to prove.

Kestner tells us that Lotte had a good cry over Goethe's departure, and the loss he would be to them; and when soon after the affianced pair were married, it was Goethe who furnished the wedding-ring, while their first boy received his name of Wolfgang.

As for Goethe himself, after leaving Wetzlar in this somewhat melodramatic fashion, he proceeded with Merck down the Lahn Valley to Ehrenbreitstein, where the latter introduced him to the house of Frau von Laroche, and where he seems to have sufficiently recovered to have taken a very tender interest in her black-eyed daughter Maximiliane.

Frankfort was reached on September 21, and the very next day he was visited by Kestner, who met him again with pleasure and in the most friendly manner.

He now plunged himself into work again,

though Wetzlar was not forgotten, a lively correspondence being kept up with the lovers, and a silhouette of Lotte, hung over his bed, serving to keep her still more vividly in his memory.

In November he went with his future brother-in-law, Schlosser, to Wetzlar, and there he learnt of the death of Jerusalem, a young man attached to the Brunswick Legation, whom he had known at Leipsic, but of whom he had seen little at Wetzlar. Jerusalem was of a silent, moody temperament, and a hopeless passion for the wife of another, added to disappointment at missing the hoped-for success in his profession, had driven him to despair, and, borrowing from Kestner a pair of pistols on the pretence of being about to undertake a journey, he shot himself on the night of October 29. Goethe persuaded Kestner to narrate to him all the circumstances in detail, and made of the sad incident one of the elements of his *Werther* story.

But before *Werther* there appeared another work which once for all established his literary reputation upon a solid basis. This was *Götz*, which had been rewritten since the return from Wetzlar, and was published by him at his own expense, with the help of Merck, in its present form.

Its success was phenomenal, and it spread through the whole of Germany, though Goethe,

thanks to a pirated edition, was out of pocket by the venture. At the same time the reputation of the young writer was made, and even his financial value had become so enhanced that an enterprising bookseller offered him very good terms for "a dozen similar plays." Nor was the sincerest of all compliments wanting, for imitations sprang up on every hand, and for a time Germany was inundated with romances, which betrayed more or less openly their descent from *Götz*.

With its appearance Goethe became at one stroke the recognised leader of the literary movement which comprised most of the young writers of the day, and which was known as the "Storm and Stress," from a drama of Klinger, himself one of the *Stürmer und Dränger*.

That movement was one of liberty and individuality, both in thought and expression, and just as it claimed freedom from the literary conventions and free play for the personality of the writer, so it asserted for the citizen the rights and duties of individuality against the cramping traditions of an outlived past.

This double current of the movement found a striking presentment in the play, for all literary conventions, including the hoary tradition of the unities, were thrown to the winds, while in the robber-knight of the sixteenth century, who sacrificed his life in a single-handed fight against

the overwhelming odds of injustice and corruption, the Stürmer und Dränger saw their ideals and aspirations set forth in a way that made them at once recognise in this still nameless author their natural captain.

As for Herder, he saw, to his surprise, this work, of the imperfections of which he had been so sure, raise its anonymous author to the position of literary leader of his day.

All this time *Werther* had been slowly maturing. We have seen what were the actual circumstances of Goethe's stay in Wetzlar; we have observed with what particular attention he ascertained all the facts of the sad end of young Jerusalem, and these elements we find in the famous work which joined with *Götz* to make him the foremost man of letters in Germany, and at the same time represented another phase of *Sturm und Drang*—the vague, unsatisfied longings, the dark, unfathomable passions and emotions, and the weariness of life, the *Weltschmerz*, from which the cultured world was then in reality or imagination suffering.

Die Leiden des jungen Werthers appeared in 1774, and at once spread over the whole country. It was soon translated into every language of Europe, and everywhere criticised and reviewed, praised and blamed, with passionate zeal. A whole crop of imitations sprang up, and the "*Wertherfieber*" by which it was followed showed

on what ready soil the seed had fallen. This was, indeed, the secret of its success, that Goethe had expressed what everyone was feeling; but while it aroused in others a still greater fury of morbid sentimentality, to him it had brought only relief from the unhealthy feelings which, once expressed, he had done with for ever.

The flood of sentimental literature and the morbid sensibility for which the book was responsible became, in fact, somewhat of a trial to its author, and he tried to check the harmful tendency by a satirical work entitled the *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* (1781). Of the way in which the harmful effects of the book were brought to his own notice we shall later on have to chronicle an instance.

One of the two first copies of *Werther* was sent to Lotte, and, strangely enough, it does not seem to have ever occurred to Goethe that she or her husband might object to the uncalled-for publicity thus given to their affairs under so very thin a disguise, and which Kestner, at any rate, not unnaturally resented. The letter which was sent with the book to Lotte, who was now a happy mother, is a good instance of the artificial sentimentality of the time, in which real passion and feeling were replaced by their intellectual shadows:

"Lotte, how dear this little book is to me thou

wilt feel in reading it, and this copy is as dear to me as if it were the only one in the world. Thou must have it, Lotte; I have kissed it a hundred times, have kept it locked up, that no one might touch it. Oh, Lotte, I wish each to read it alone —thou alone, Kestner alone—and each to write me a word about it. Lotte, Lotte, adieu!"

In spite of the coolness which followed the publication of *Werther*, Kestner and Goethe continued to correspond till the end of the century, while Goethe saw Lotte years after, in 1816, in Weimar, when he found her palsied but still beautiful.

Such were the two works which made Goethe not only a famous writer, but a force in the land; for in them he had shown that he was at the heart of the thought of his age, and had made himself a living exponent of the minds of his contemporaries.

These Frankfort years from 1772 to 1775 were a time of almost feverishly active production, in which, besides the greater and lesser works which were actually completed, seeds were sown which were to bear fruit in later years.

At the same time he was engaged as an advocate, working with the help of his father, with whom he now appears to have lived on better terms, though all true sympathy between them was impossible. He was a journalist, too, and his

writings on professional subjects and the articles in the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen* show the characteristics of his style and genius.

A witty little work written at this time was *Götter Helden und Wieland*, a satiric dialogue written in the style of Lucian and directed against Wieland, in which ancient gods and heroes appear to Wieland, and reproach him for representing them to the world in such a modern sentimental fashion, and robbing them of their ancient vigour and greatness. Wieland's answer was to recommend the persiflage to the attention of his readers in his paper, the *Teutsche Merkur*.

Soon after the completion of *Werther* was written *Clavigo*, a play founded on the memoirs of Beaumarchais, whose trial ended on February 16, 1774. It is the story of an ambitious man of letters, who, on achieving brilliant success, abandons the woman to whom he is engaged and breaks her heart, and is characteristically compounded of fact and of Goethe's own imagination.

The play was written in eight days, and the story of its composition is recounted at length by Goethe in his Autobiography. It was very successful, and is still acted to-day, though it is of little real merit. Merck's comment was: "You must not write such rubbish any more; others can do that as well." It is interesting to note

that it was the first work published under his own name.

Of the works of this period which were begun and not finished, the most important is *Mahomet*, which was to have been a drama in five acts, and of the intended scope of which Goethe has himself given us a lengthy account, for it was at the time a subject very near to his heart, and one of which he hoped much.

Finally, some scenes of *Faust* were written in this time of Storm and Stress, the interest in the *Faust* of the pre-Weimar days centring in the Gretchen incident, with reminiscences of Leipsic student days. The first idea of the work came to him, as he tells us, in 1769, and probably some prose scenes were written in 1772, the earliest in verse dating from the following year. A copy of the *Faust* which he took with him to Weimar, made from Goethe's manuscript by one of the Court ladies, Fräulein von Göchhausen, was discovered in 1887, and consists of some twenty scenes of prose and verse, and such it remained for more than a decade after the migration to Weimar.

Meantime he had been drawn more and more into the social life of Frankfort. The close sympathy with his sister Cornelia continued unimpaired until the November of 1773, when she was married to Schlosser, and left Frankfort for a

brief and unhappy married life, which ended with her early death in 1777.

Goethe's fame brought him new friends, and he knew more or less intimately several of the famous men of the day. In the summer of 1774 he made a journey to the Rhine with the famous educationist, Basedow, and Lavater, the physiognomist, and very amusing is the description he gives in a poem of himself as the worldling of this austere company. At Elberfeld Goethe saw his old Strasburg friend Jung Stilling, and at Düsseldorf he met the Jacobis.

On his return to Frankfort in the autumn, he received in his father's house a visit from Klopstock (then a man of fifty), the acknowledged head of the German Parnassus; and the famous author of the *Messias*, and the young genius of half his age met and parted with much mutual appreciation, which, unfortunately, was doomed to be but very short-lived.

On December 11 of the same year he made a still more important acquaintance, and one which was the first indication of the approaching crisis in his life. This was Karl Ludwig von Knebel, who, with the young Duke Karl August of Weimar, then in his eighteenth year, his younger brother Constantine, and their tutor, was passing through Frankfort on the way to France. Knebel introduced him the same evening to the Duke,

and a mutual attraction seems at once to have been felt between them, while Knebel himself thought Goethe the best of men. The conversation turned on Möser's *Patriotische Phantasien*, and in the discussion of that work Goethe displayed a deep insight into the question of the welfare of the people. The Duke invited him to visit them at Mainz, where they were making a longer stay, and thither he proceeded with Knebel on the 13th, and stayed with the ducal party till the 15th, the mutual esteem of Goethe and the Duke being only strengthened and confirmed by longer acquaintanceship.

On his return to Frankfort Goethe found, to his great grief, that his old friend Fräulein von Klettenberg had died on the day of his departure, and was already buried. "Dead and buried in my absence, she who was so dear, so much to me," he writes to Frau von Laroche, and there is no doubt that he felt very keenly the loss of this quiet, pietistic woman, whose character was in so many ways in such striking contrast to his own.

So the year 1775 drew on, the richest, perhaps, in outward change and incident of Goethe's eventful life. Little did he imagine when that year dawned that before its close he would have been an accepted and engaged lover, and would have left his native city, never, as it turned out, to return other than as a visitor.

On the last night of the old year, 1774, Goethe was introduced by a friend to the house of Frau Schönemann, the widow of a wealthy banker, which had become the centre of some of the most brilliant gatherings in Frankfort. Her only daughter was Anna Elizabeth, known as Lili, then in her seventeenth year, a fair-haired girl with dark-blue eyes, who at once attracted Goethe, both by her winning presence and her culture and many accomplishments. Intellectual sympathy and mutual confidences soon ripened this attachment into love, and for a time we find the unconventional poet, who was fond of calling himself "the bear," thoroughly tamed and performing the social round, dressed in a gold-laced coat, like the most conventional of courtiers. Yet the chain soon began to grow irksome; he felt, as we know from his writings, that all this was a lowering of his ideals, and he began to bear with an ever worse grace Lili's coquettish exactions. He felt that he was losing his real self in this artificial world; some words of his a year later to Lavater are significant: "As soon as one is in society, one takes the key from one's heart and puts it in one's pocket: those who leave it in are the fools."

However, in spite of the unsuitability of the match, the opposition of both families was overcome, and in April the lovers were engaged. "Thus," says the moralizing Goethe of the Auto-

biography, "it was a strange decree of the guiding Power above that in the course of my strange existence I should, after all, know what it is like to be an engaged lover." Yet, for all that, things did not go any better, and the alternate attraction and repulsion of the new relationship kept Goethe in a perpetual conflict of emotions. Add to this the incompatibility of the two families and his sister's active disapproval, and we can hardly wonder if Goethe felt that such a state of things could not continue. He resolved to try his old remedy of flight, and seized the opportunity of accompanying the two Counts Stolberg to Switzerland to turn his back for a time on a state of things which was growing unbearable. With these two wild young *Stürmer und Dränger* he threw himself, from the reaction, all the more gladly into the spirit of a careless, madcap holiday.

Yet, though he had fled from Lili, he could not free himself from the thought of her; the fairest prospects and the wildest pleasures could not distract his thoughts, and from within sight of Italy, his promised land, he returned to Frankfort, arriving there in July. For a time his passion flamed up again more brightly than ever, and August was a halcyon time, spent with Lili at Offenbach. But the old strain soon made itself felt again, jealousy was added to his other troubles, and considering that not only on his, but on her

side too, all influence was being brought to bear to show the inadvisability of their marriage, it is little wonder that in September the final separation came. To Goethe's love for Lili we owe some of his most beautiful lyrics, and among other minor works the vaudeville *Erwin und Elmire.*

Under these circumstances, nothing could have been more welcome than an invitation he received to pay a visit to the Weimar Court. The Duke passed through Frankfort, both on his way to Darmstadt to celebrate his marriage with the Princess Louise, and on his return journey. It was arranged that one of the Duke's carriages should call for Goethe and take him to Weimar, and Goethe made all preparations for departure; but day after day went by, and no carriage came. His father, the old Councillor, who was imbued with the sturdy, independent spirit of a burgher of the old imperial city, had never liked this new friendship with the aristocrats, remembering the recent case of Voltaire and his imperial patron, and now thought he saw his worst anticipations fulfilled.

Having bidden all his friends farewell and explained his projected visit, Goethe could not well go among them again, and he lived during these days of anxious waiting in a far from enviable frame of mind, passing the time by working at *Egmont,* which he nearly completed in its first

form, and read to his father, who took a particular interest in the work. He only ventured out at night, to roam the well-known streets. Nor was Lili forgotten, in spite of the separation, and very interesting is the account he himself gives us of one of these nightly rambles.

"Wrapped in a big cloak, I stole about in the town, past the houses of my friends and acquaintances, and did not fail to go to Lili's window. She lived in the ground-floor of a corner house; the green blinds were let down, but I could plainly see that the lights stood in the accustomed place. Soon I heard her singing at the piano; it was the song: *Ach, wie ziehst du mich unwiderstehlich!** which had been written for her not quite a year before. I could not help thinking that she sang it with more expression than ever; I could understand every word. I held my ear as close as the outward-bent window-grating allowed, and when she had finished I saw by the shadow, which fell on the blinds, that she had risen; she walked to and fro, but I sought in vain to catch the outline of her dear form between the close bars. Only the fixed determination to go away, not to trouble her by my presence, but really to relinquish her, and the thought what a strange sensation my reappearance would cause,

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book XVII., Weimar edition, vol. xxix., p. 40.

gave me the resolution to leave so dear a presence."*

At last he could endure the delay no longer, and on October 30 gave way to his father's wishes, and set out for Italy, decided, however, to stay a few days in Heidelberg in the hopes that he might yet meet the carriage there. Thence he was summoned back by a messenger to Frankfort, where he found the long-expected carriage waiting, and drove in the company of the Chamberlain, Von Kalb, to Weimar, arriving there in the early morning of November 7.

So ends the first big chapter of Goethe's life, for the visit to the Weimar Court was destined to last, with few and brief interruptions, for more than half a century. With it ends, too, his famous Autobiography, and the passage from *Egmont* which forms its conclusion, while having a peculiar fitness as there applied to the journey from the one life to the other, receives from its position a still wider significance.

All attempts to dissuade him from the journey are of no avail, and at last, impatient of delay, he cries: "Child, child, have done! As though lashed by invisible spirits, the sun-horses of Time bolt with the light vehicle of our fate, and nothing remains for us but in brave composure to grasp

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book XX., Weimar edition, vol. xxix., p. 184.

the reins tightly, and, now left, now right, to keep the wheels clear of stock and stone. Whither we go, who knows? Hardly does one remember whence he came."*

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book XX., Weimar edition, vol. xxix., p. 192.

CHAPTER VII

YEARS OF SERVICE

WEIMAR, the capital and residence of the Grand-Duchy of Saxony, is to-day a bright little city, where the old and the new jostle one another in a way that is characteristic of the prosperous, progressive Germany of the Empire. It would be a charming little town even without the many and universal reminders of its golden age. By the side of old buildings and old quarters speaking of a distant past we have fine public buildings, carefully-laid-out squares, and all the scientific apparatus that is the outward and visible sign of twentieth-century civilization. Add to this the pretty little river, the Ilm, the handsome grand-ducal palace and many other stately buildings, the beautiful surroundings, Belvedere, Tiefurt, Ettersburg, and, further away, Jena and Eisenach, with the Thüringer Wald, and last, but not least, the more than ordinarily beautiful park, the English appearance of which is more than fortuitous, and

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over all cast the romantic charm of an illustrious past and the shadow of more than one great name, and it is little wonder that Weimar has for the pilgrim of to-day a fascination hard to parallel.

Memories and associations crowd upon us on every side, imagination is constantly busy with the reconstruction of the past—whether we stand, for instance, on the veranda of the *Borkenhäuschen* and imagine we are Karl August, and Goethe is making a sign to us from his *Gartenhaus* (imagination is doubly necessary here, as the two are now hidden from one another by the luxuriant growth of trees), or, leaning on a bridge over the Ilm, recall the story of Goethe's bathing there in the moonlight and being taken by the terrified peasant for something uncanny.

If we turn across one of the bridges and make our way to the *Gartenhaus* itself, we pass in through the little garden to the rooms in which Goethe passed a considerable part of his life, and can stand beside the simple table at which he wrote, and the luxurious desk which he, characteristically, did not favour. We can see still in his bedroom his convertible bed and travelling-trunk, and the two-handled straw bag, like that of an English carpenter, in which he used to collect his geological specimens, or pack up a simple meal with a bottle or two of wine for some little outing such as Eckermann describes. Or we can walk

in the garden behind, with its paths winding among the trees on the steep hillside, and stand on Goethe's favourite spot and see the stone with its inscription to her who was the inspiration of his early Weimar years. It all makes Goethe seem very near and very real. Past and present, reality and romance, are strangely interwoven, and as we gaze on the signs of material well-being, and see how the forces of Nature have been tamed and put to the service of man, we cannot but reflect that the town in which his spirit lives is like a realization of the dream of Goethe's maturest years—to see poetry joining hands with marching civilization, and finding the highest ideal in lofty unselfish labour for the furtherance of the race.

Far different was the Weimar of a century and a quarter ago. To-day it has nearly 30,000 inhabitants; when Goethe arrived there its population was barely 6,000. The city walls were still standing, portcullis and gates were still intact, and the keeping of the latter was so little of a formality that no one could pass them without entering his name in the sentinel's book.

It was just the quiet, sleepy *Residenz* of one of the smaller German States. There was nothing in any way exceptional in its past, and there had been no feature giving promise of anything to break its dull routine in the future, till the

arrival of one woman in Weimar changed the face of things and paved the way indirectly for its Golden Age.

Anna Amalia, the Dowager-Duchess, then only thirty-six, was of the House of Brunswick, and after a brief married life had been left at nineteen a widow with two sons. Thrown thus early on her own resources, she developed a great independence of character, and impressed her stamp upon the life of Weimar in a way that was destined to bear lasting fruits. As tutor of her eldest son she chose the poet Wieland, and thus brought to Weimar in 1772 the first of the line of poets who were to make of the *Ilm-Athen* the capital of German letters.

Afterwards literature became strong and more independent of her fostering care, but it was she that sowed the seed from which the glorious harvest came. Intellectual without pedantry, with a light-hearted joy in life like that of Goethe's own mother, she deserved the description the latter, her "Liebste Frau Aja," gave of her: "A princess who, all in all, was really a princess, who has shown the world that she can rule, who possesses the great art of winning all hearts, who, in a word, was born to be a blessing to mankind." The Duke Karl August was then a youth of eighteen, sound in heart and will, simple and straightforward, rather sensuous than

intellectual, possessed more of the gifts of the heart and character than of the head; yet he had the welfare of his State even then before his eyes, and seems, though still a boy, to have possessed already one of the characteristics of a born ruler —the power of recognising a man when he saw one. Already in the previous year at Frankfort Goethe's gifts and enthusiasm had made a deep impression on him, and he never wavered in his allegiance to the greatness which he instinctively felt in him.

He married on October 3, 1775, Louise, the youngest of the eight children of that Landgravine Caroline of Darmstadt who had formed there the literary circle which was already well known to Goethe through Merck. Of a retiring and somewhat formal disposition, she did not take a leading part in the intellectual life of these early Weimar years, partly, perhaps, overshadowed by the more commanding figure of Anna Amalia, partly because she regarded at first with little favour her husband's relations with his poet friend, and the unconventional life for which the Court of Weimar became famous.

The younger brother of the Duke, Prince Constantine, played no very prominent part in the Weimar life. His tutor was the Major Karl Ludwig von Knebel who had introduced Goethe to the Duke in Frankfort, a constant friend of

GOETHE AGED TWENTY-NINE

Goethe's, and himself a writer and translator, whose renderings of Lucretius and Propertius possessed considerable merit.

Under such conditions Goethe arrived in Weimar on November 7 on a visit to the Duke. The very first day a reception was given in honour of the famous poet who had just taken the world by storm. There it was that Wieland, then in the early forties, met him, and was at once carried away by the magnetism of his personality. "My soul is as full of Goethe as a dewdrop of the morning sun," he said; and in a poem of the next year he speaks of the effect this "magician," this "handsome wizard with his black and witching eyes," produced in their midst. There is a beautiful absence of anything akin to envy in this, coming as it did from the man who was then the leader of the literary society of Weimar, and of resentment on the part of the man whose treatment of the antique Goethe had only the year before held up to ridicule.

Goethe was then just over six-and-twenty, and splendid in a seldom rivalled combination of physical and mental endowments. "A magnificent youth," Wieland calls him, while Knebel tells how he rose like a star in the heavens, and all, especially the women, worshipped him. He seems, in fact, for a time to have completely turned the heads of the Court circle, and the

author of *Werther* became the centre of a round of revelries and sentimental excesses which sought to realize the *Schwärmerei* of that famous book. The men all donned the *Werther* uniform—top-boots, blue coat, yellow waistcoat, three-cornered hat, and all; the ladies, too, shared in the succession of dances, masquerades, skating-parties, and merry jaunts, with which the gay round was kept up.

Goethe and the Duke almost lived together. Goethe slept in the Duke's own chamber; they bathed together, dined together, and made themselves at times ridiculous together. The Duke addressed Goethe by the familiar *du*.

Reports spread about the land of the mad doings at Weimar, and naturally lost none of their colour on the way, till of the wild, unconventional, somewhat self-conscious and posing, but on the whole quite harmless, doings of a party of high-spirited young people there grew orgies of a somewhat vague but scandalizing nature. Solemn friends who knew no such riot of the blood held it their duty to be shocked. Klopstock wrote him an epistolary sermon, in which he tried to make him responsible for the Duke's alleged intemperate habits and neglect of his wife. Goethe answered, "Spare us in future such letters, dear Klopstock," without taking the trouble to refute the charge, merely remarking that he might be

found no worse, and perhaps even better, than formerly. To which the fulminating bard replied by excommunicating the unrepentant and insufficiently adoring young sinner.

All this time, it must be borne in mind, Goethe was the guest of the Duke, and not the Weimar resident and official he later became, and in this fact extenuation could, if needed, be found for the excesses of these first months and for his share of the responsibility for them.

When with the spring of 1776 the time came to decide on leaving or staying, he had become indispensable to the Duke, who could "no longer swim nor wade without him," and when he made one of his characteristic attempts to solve the difficulty by flight, the Duke prevailed on him to return, and conferred on him the *Gartenhaus*, and appointed him *Geheimer Legationsrat*, with seat and voice in the Privy Council and a salary of 1,200 thalers a year. To the poet's father, who was anything but pleased at the loss of his son, and thought gloomily of Frederick the Great and Voltaire, and the inconstancy of princes in general, Karl August wrote: "Goethe can have only one position, that of my friend; all others are beneath him."

Thus Goethe entered into the service of the Weimar State, in which he later became responsible for finance, the war commission, and the

administration of roads, mines, and forests. In 1779 he was made *Geheimrat*. In 1782 he was ennobled by the Emperor Joseph II., taking as his arms a silver star on an azure field, while in the same year he received the presidency of the Chamber, thus becoming First Minister and the highest official in the duchy.

With a permanent position and duties came a due feeling of his responsibilities, and the only refutation needed of the calumnies that, even after the first wild months, continued to be heaped upon him is an impartial investigation of the way in which he discharged his important functions, and the spirit in which he regarded his task. Of that spirit we have an eloquent expression in the noble poem *Ilmenau*, written, in celebration of the Duke's birthday, on September 3, 1783, in which Goethe recalls the follies and errors of Karl August's youth and his own, and of which the frankness of speech and exhortation does equal honour to poet and prince.

One of Goethe's first acts as a resident and Councillor of Weimar was to obtain, not without considerable difficulty, the appointment of his old critic Herder as Court Preacher and General Superintendent of the Consistory of Weimar. There was much opposition to be overcome on the part of the orthodox, whose bitter antagonism Herder had aroused, and Goethe exposed himself

to no little unpopularity in championing his cause. Herder was appointed, and settled permanently in Weimar, thus adding another famous name to the brilliant roll of Weimar's poets, which was not to be completed by the arrival of Schiller till 1799.

In this, as in all similar circumstances, Goethe showed himself a staunch friend, though neither now, nor for the help he later constantly gave to Herder and his family, did he receive any gratitude, but rather, as it seems, only resentment for the benefits he left unconferred. Herder's nature was little like that of Wieland, and the latter's generous recognition of superior powers was for him impossible.

As yet no mention has been made of one of the most potent factors in Goethe's life and development at this time. Feminine influence played throughout an important part in his moral and intellectual life, and of no epoch is this more true than of the first ten years at Weimar.

From shortly after his arrival till his departure for Italy, and in correspondence during his absence there, he shared his inner life with a woman with whom he stood on a footing of greater sympathy and intellectual intimacy than was the case in any of his other attachments. Up till now he had felt the attraction only of more or less immature girls, whose knowledge of the

world was far inferior to his own, and in the relationship with whom the romantic element was predominant. His love for Käthchen, for Friederike, for Lili, claimed only one part of him, and was even antagonistic to the harmonious development of what he could not but feel to be the greater and higher sides of his nature.

This conflict is seen very clearly in his action in each case. Throughout the latter part of his relations with Lili it is very clearly expressed, too, in words.

This time it was no young girl whose beauty fettered his senses, but a woman seven years his senior, the mother of a large family, who had never been physically beautiful, but whose graces of mind and charm won Goethe so completely that she kept, under the difficult conditions, both his love and his respect, and, in spite of stormy scenes caused by his passion and impetuosity, taught him a difficult self-restraint without forfeiting his allegiance.

Charlotte von Stein (1742-1827) was the wife of the Master of the Horse, Baron von Stein, a good fellow of no special abilities, with whom Goethe was on a footing of cordial friendship, in which, however, there was no intellectual sympathy.

Goethe and she corresponded nearly every day, and though she received back and burnt her letters to him, we possess in Goethe's an incom-

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parable record both of his love for her and of all that occupied his time and thoughts during this period. To her he poured out as in a confessional all the innermost thoughts of his heart. His love and his work are one and indivisible; he addresses by every endearment her who was his "comforter," "the dearest dream of his life," "to be worthy of whom was the wish nearest his heart," "in whose presence his spirit was bright and joyous as the sun."

Most of the work of the period bears directly or indirectly the stamp of her influence. Both Iphigenie, in the play of that name, and the Princesse in *Tasso*, have many traits borrowed from her character, while in many smaller productions her influence and inspiration are clearly traceable.

Already in 1775 Goethe had seen a silhouette of her, which had cost him three nights' sleep. "It would be a glorious spectacle to see how the world is reflected in this soul," he wrote, and this spectacle he enjoyed in the intimate friendship which now began.

When Goethe came to Weimar she was staying on her estate at Kochberg, and even on her return to Weimar the intimacy did not immediately follow, but it was not long before they were able to perceive, through all the conventionalities and formalities of Court life, the

real sympathy that existed between them, and how independent they both were of all such limitations.

The external events of this period can be briefly recounted. The end of 1777 witnessed his journey to the Harz Mountains, which is celebrated in the ode *Harzreise im Winter*. It was undertaken with the twofold object of inspecting the mining operations in the Harz, with a view to re-opening the Ilmenau works, and of visiting a young hypochondriac named Plessing, for whose Wertherian morbidity Goethe felt partly responsible. He stood on the summit of the Brocken at midday on December 10. The unfortunate Plessing fully recovered, and many years later was able, as a professor at Duisburg, to entertain his benefactor on his return from the campaign in France.

This is one of the many instances of Goethe's unobtrusive philanthropy, which forms the best refutation of the charge of cold impassivity and indifference to the well-being of his fellows so frequently brought against him.

In this same year (1777) he began *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the first part of that work which, like *Faust*, accompanied him through many years of his life and many phases of his development, and, like it, obtained thereby, together with great wealth and variety, a certain lack of unity.

The year 1779 was an eventful one for Goethe, and in a way a turning-point in his life, especially in regard to his relations to the Duke. In that year he undertook, in the company of Karl August, his second journey to Switzerland. They passed two days in his old home in Frankfort, where they found his father somewhat declining both bodily and mentally, but his mother still the same vivacious, merry "Frau Aja," whose bright spontaneity won for her the hearts of all. He passed through Sesenheim, where he found all as he had left it, and his memory still quite fresh and guarded without any trace of bitterness. He visited with Friederike the old scenes of their brief idyll, and her calm forgiveness and generous friendship were a profound satisfaction to him.

On the next day he visited Lili, too, at Strasburg, and found her the proud and happy mother of a newly-born child. From the slightly sarcastic way in which he speaks of her bourgeois satisfaction with the externals of her lot it would hardly appear as though he felt then, what he declared afterwards, that she was the only one he had truly loved. He stood also at Emmendingen by the grave of his sister Cornelia, whose restless life had thus early ended after a brief, and not very happy, marriage with his worthy but prosaic friend, Schlosser.

The *Letters from Switzerland* which he ad-

dressed to Frau von Stein form one of the most intimate and attractive parts of their correspondence, and one of the classic descriptions of travel. On the return journey Goethe was present at a distribution of prizes at the Karlsschule in Stuttgart, when Schiller, then a youth of twenty, received a prize. Great was the gulf fixed between the two who were later to enter into so close a relationship.

From Switzerland both Goethe and Karl August returned to Weimar changed men. The wild and stormy life of the first years was over; now they recognised the seriousness and importance of the different tasks that awaited them. During this time together, away from Court life and traditional surroundings, Goethe's influence for good seems to have finally gained its hold upon the Duke's character. Goethe himself, as poet and as man, had definitely left the Storm and Stress behind him; office, years, and the moderating influence of a mature and high-minded woman, had established the predominance of the sounder and saner elements of his nature.

In the year 1779 *Iphigenie* was written in its first form, and in this prose setting was acted before the ducal Court of Weimar, with Corona Schröter as Iphigenie, Prince Constantine as Pylades, and Goethe himself as Orestes. The piece made a great impression, and, above all,

Goethe won the admiration of the spectators, appearing in his union of physical and intellectual perfection "like an Apollo descended from heaven to incorporate the beauty of Greece." In 1780 *Tasso* was begun, but soon laid aside again.

During this period Goethe devoted much of his energy to scientific studies, for it must not be forgotten that for many years of his life he valued his reputation as a scientist quite as highly as that of a man of letters. He began the study of anatomy and osteology, and in 1784 he made the important discovery that the intermaxillary bone exists in man in a rudimentary form, and thereby contributed to the conception of the organic connection between all forms of animal life. Rather by intuition and imagination than by the minute exactitude of his scientific investigations, he was one of the forerunners in the establishment of the great theory of evolution. He discovered that the skull is only a development of the vertebræ of the spine; he recognised that all the parts of the plant, except the root and the stem, are modified forms of the leaf. He also devoted much time to the study of geology, though with less success, while of his investigations into the nature of light we shall speak later.

Between the Swiss journey and the departure for Italy he wrote also several of his most beautiful and famous poems—among others, *Über allen Gipfeln*

ist Ruh, Das Göttliche, Der Erlkönig, Auf Miedings Tod, and the *Zueignung,* which originally belonged to the unfinished *Geheimnisse,* but now forms the introduction to his collected poems. Thus, these ten years had been very full and not unfruitful, and had contributed much to Goethe's many-sided development, and resulted in the production, inception, or furtherance of many of his greatest works.

Yet, as time went on, the consciousness strengthened that the many calls upon his time and energies were inimical to the full exercise of his creative power. His many unfinished literary projects called ever more importunately for completion, while at the same time his relations to Frau von Stein grew more and more to a torture which promised no relief, and the whole finally led him to the resolve to flee to Italy, and so satisfy the longing of his life.

On September 3 he left Carlsbad, which he had visited for the first time in the previous year, and where he had been staying since the end of July, the Duke and his faithful servant Seidel alone knowing of his plans, and in the assumed character of a merchant, and under the name of Müller, set out for the Promised Land.

CHAPTER VIII

ITALY

THE two years of absence from Weimar, with its monotonous round of official and Court routine, and the free and unfettered life in Italy, the realization of his dreams, formed an epoch in Goethe's development, and influenced permanently his conception of life and of his own mission.

At the end of the time he said, "I have found myself again in this year and a half's retirement, but as what?—as an artist," meaning thereby, not that he had recognised the exercise of plastic art as his true vocation—he had, in fact, found his limitations during this period—but that he had arrived at the conviction that in literary creation lay his strength and his life's work. He calls it "his new intellectual birth, which transformed him from within."

The time in Italy was one of great productivity. New literary projects were formed, unfinished works were completed or continued, while others

not written at the time owed their inspiration entirely to the period. But before all he entered into the very spirit of antiquity, and, learning to regard life through the eyes of its "noble simplicity and placid greatness," gained an enduring equanimity and possession of soul.

From Carlsbad Goethe travelled over the Brenner, by Lake Garda—on the shores of which, feeling himself "at least as lonely as his heroine on the coast of Tauris," he commenced the new version of *Iphigenie*—to Verona, where he saw the great Roman amphitheatre, and thence to Venice. A fortnight he spent in the city of the Doges, attracted less by its romantic charms and the treasures of its galleries than by the buildings of Palladio and the bright Southern life and population. Then he pressed on to the goal of his pilgrimage, Rome, where he arrived at the end of October. The first stay in Rome lasted from October till February. Living as a simple German artist, he soon found himself in a congenial circle, the most prominent members of which were the painters Tischbein and Angelica Kaufmann, the philologist Moritz, and the artist and art critic Meyer.

Though busy with the study and practice of art, the final version of *Iphigenie* proceeded apace, the recasting of the second prose version into iambics being, moreover, no difficult matter, as the lan-

guage was so rhythmical that the division into blank verse was often little more than mechanical. This final form of Goethe's *Iphigenie*—the fourth, as the original prose version had already in 1780 been cast into iambics, and then again rewritten in a second prose form—shows Goethe's classical art at its height, while the blank verse is commonly regarded as the purest the German language has to show.

Though Grecian in form—of the many surviving Greek plays on the subject, Goethe follows most closely that of Euripides—the spirit poured into the Grecian mould is quite "un-Greek and modern," to use Schiller's expression. Conflict and action have become internal; the final triumph is an ideal one, that of truth and purity as personified in the highest type of womanhood.

The play thus deals rather with the spiritual than the material world, and what it gains in poetic worth and moral depth it loses in dramatic force, being, indeed, quite untragic in its absence of external action. The influence of Frau von Stein is seen not only in the delineation of Iphigenie herself, but also in the somewhat incorporeal idealism of the whole.

It was finished in January and sent to the Weimar friends, but was received at first coolly, not finding that recognition which had been given to the first prose version in 1779. Only gradually

did the depth and poetic value of the work come to be duly appreciated.

In February Goethe left Rome for Naples, where he enjoyed to the full the unique beauty of the natural position. He visited Pompeii, and thrice made the ascent of Vesuvius. At Sorrento he worked at *Tasso*, though this dramatic episode from the life of a poet, which contains so much that was analogous to his own life, was not completed till 1789, after the return to Weimar.

From Naples he sailed at the end of March to Sicily, and there, amid surroundings so essentially Greek, Homer established his empire over him, and he formed the plan of a Homeric tragedy, *Nausikaa*, founded on the story of the Odyssey, which had been awakened to fresh life during his short sea-voyage. We have only a few scenes, fragments, and directions of the projected play, but they form the most eloquent testimony to the influence of Homeric studies on Goethe.

After traversing the whole island, he departed once more for Rome, where he arrived on June 6, and stayed till April 23. He was now no stranger there; he settled down at once to a life full of work and enjoyment in the midst of congenial friends and fellow-artists. He drew, he modelled, he studied works of art and the city itself, which was for him the greatest work of art of all, and at the same time literary productivity did not cease.

Egmont, the commencement of which at the end of the Frankfort time, under the encouragement of his father, is described in the final pages of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and which had been continued and provisionally completed at Weimar in 1782, was taken up again and brought to a conclusion in September, 1787. This drama, too, with its story of the loves of a great man and a simple maiden, contains aspects of Goethe's own life.

Historical fact he treated very freely, though the background is on the whole true in spirit. His main source was Strada's famous Latin history of the war in the Netherlands. The greatest of all his deviations from fact consisted in making of the real Egmont, who was the father of a family, a romantic youth; but to this charge, when brought against him by Schiller in his severe criticism of the play, Goethe replied that the economy of the piece and his own poetic and dramatic aims necessitated the transformation. Whatever its weaknesses as a stage play and whatever its historical inaccuracies, it is generally admitted that Egmont and Clärchen are two of the most admirable and sympathetic characters, not only of Goethe's, but of any drama.

In addition Goethe wrote in Italy some beautiful poems, the most famous being *Amor als Landschaftsmaler*, written at the beginning of 1788, and which enshrines the memory of the *Schöne*

Mailänderin, Maddalena Riggi. He added some scenes to *Faust,* notably the *Hexenküche* scene, which, though written in the gardens of the Villa Borghese, is among its most "Northern" parts; a Diary, which some thirty years later was to form the foundation of the *Italienische Reise;* and last but not least, many full and valuable letters to the faithful friends left behind in Weimar, including Frau von Stein, from whom the journey had by no means meant the beginning of the final parting.

After spending thus nearly a full year in Rome, entering keenly into its life, and assimilating with all his power all it had to offer, after adding, too, a Roman carnival to his other experiences, he left sadly his land of freedom on April 22, and, passing quickly through even Florence and Milan, reached Weimar on June 18.

CHAPTER IX

BACK IN WEIMAR

REGARDED with Italian eyes, Goethe's Northern home looked very different to him on his return. Its conventionalities and the etiquette of its Court seemed more petty. His point of view had changed, and therewith carried him farther from the friends who had remained behind. The Duke had become fully emancipated, and with Frau von Stein an estrangement took place which soon became complete. The departure for Italy and the sojourn there had not meant a break with the reigning sovereign of his first Weimar years, as the letters from Italy show, but it is not impossible that when they met on his return the new Goethe suffered a disillusionment, though he had guarded her image faithfully during absence. Whether that be so or not, an event which occurred soon after his arrival in Weimar, and which was destined to have a very wide bearing on his life, brought about a final rupture.

final friendship with Schiller are soon told. In September, 1788, Goethe met Schiller for the second time at Rudolstadt, but the meeting and the conversation they held did not bring them any nearer together. Goethe believed the author of the *Räuber* to be still an exponent of the Storm and Stress which he had himself outgrown, and now shunned as the ghost of his own past sin; while Schiller, not free from envy of the favoured lot of the older poet, as appears in the correspondence with Körner, felt no personal attraction.

Many short journeys were undertaken to neighbouring Courts and cities, while in 1790 he was once more in Venice, whither he had gone to meet the Duchess Anna Amalia on her return from Italy.

In the same year he accompanied the Duke to Silesia, where the Prussian and Austrian rulers met, and so was dragged into personal participation in the great upheaval caused by the French Revolution, which plays so important a part even in his life and writings during this period.

In 1792 he went with the Duke to the North of France to take part in the war against the Revolutionists, and in 1793 to the siege of Mainz, where he made frequent opportunities of visiting his old Frankfort home.

He was interested less during these campaigns in the political and military aspects of the undertakings than in the opportunity they afforded him

for scientific observation, a bombardment furnishing him with interesting optical phenomena, and a battle with an opportunity of experimenting on his own sensations. In perfect possession of soul he worked away at his theory of colours in spite of all the discomforts of the unwonted military life.

Goethe's account of these experiences, the *Kampagne in Frankreich* and *Belagerung von Mainz*, was not published till many years afterwards, in 1822, during the period of his principal autobiographical labours.

The literary work of the time stands largely in more or less close connection with these outward events. The *Römische Elegien*, begun in 1788, celebrate, in form and warmth and imagery which is due to the inspiration of his Italian experiences, the happiness he found in the love of Christiane. Still more passionate and pagan are the *Venetianische Epigramme*, which were the fruit of the journey to Venice in 1790.

Results of Italian labours were embodied in *Tasso*, the prose beginnings of which date back to the years 1780-81, and which was finally completed in 1789 and printed in 1790, and in the *Faust* fragment which appeared in 1790, almost unnoticed.

Several works were directly inspired by the events of the French Revolution—the satiric

comedy, the *Bürgergeneral* (1793); the dramatic fragment, the *Aufgeregten* (1794), in which the extremes of both aristocracy and people are ridiculed; the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (1793-1795), a prose cycle-epic, like Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, embodying conflicting views on the great question of the day.

Most important of all is the masterly "lay-bible" *Reineke Fuchs* (1794), a version in hexameters of the famous old mediæval beast-epic, after a popular verse embodiment which appeared at the end of the fifteenth century. Goethe did not, however, go back to this version directly, but followed closely a prose translation by Gottsched, which appeared in 1752, while making some alterations which gave it a more directly modern and individual bearing. Under the image of the animal world are portrayed the petty aims and motives of the "little world of men."

In addition there appeared two works which resulted from the scientific studies to which he ardently devoted himself during these years, the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (1790), and, from 1791, the *Beiträge zur Optik*, the former only being of real scientific value.

Thus we see that the time immediately following the return from Italy was poor in really creative work, though not unproductive in other respects. It saw the completion of the first edition of his

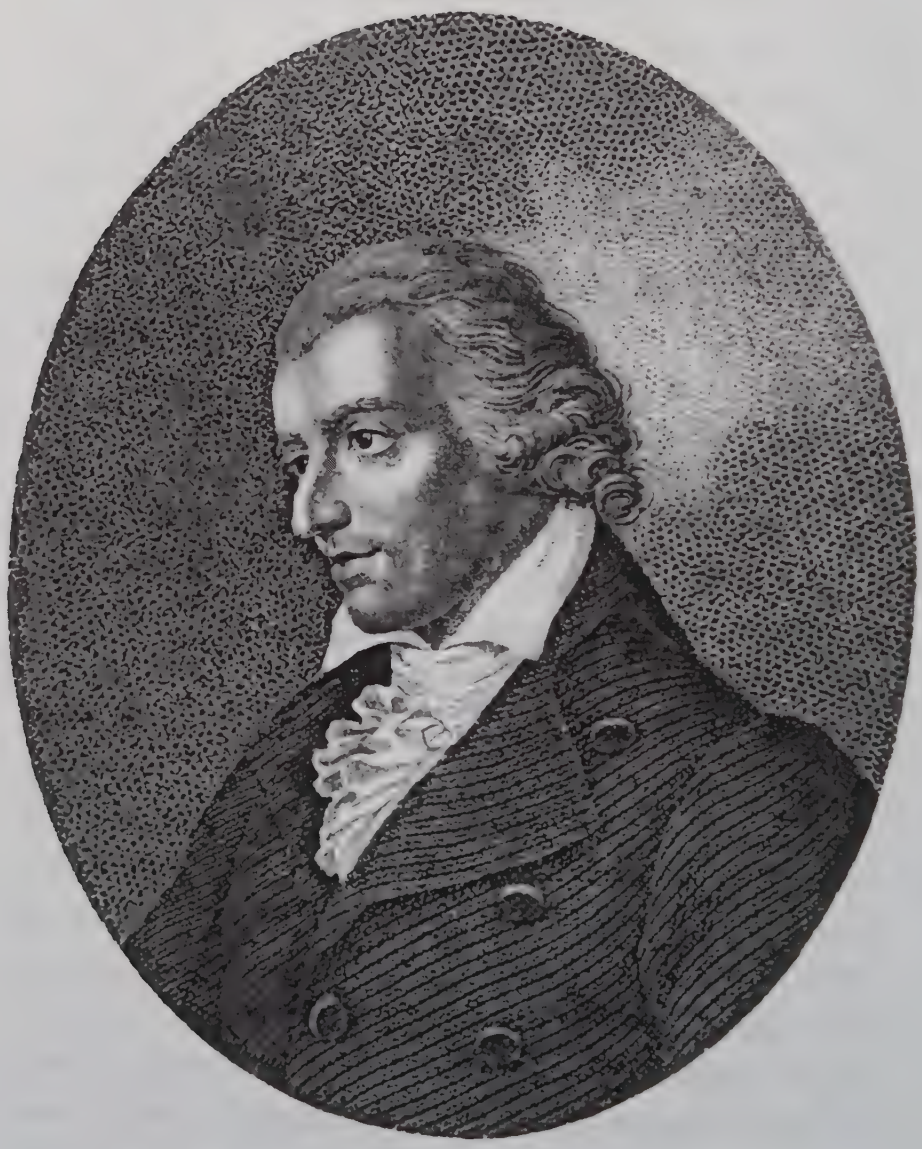
collected works, the *Schriften*, published with Göschen in Leipsic in eight volumes (1787-1790), the preparation of which was begun before the journey to Italy, and continued vigorously while there, and the commencement of a second with Unger in Berlin (1792-1800), the *Neue Schriften*, in seven volumes, especially important in that it contained the beginning of the novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, which plays so important a part in the following period, and in the welding of literary sympathies in the early stages of his friendship with Schiller.

CHAPTER X

FRIENDSHIP WITH SCHILLER

A LITTLE past the middle of his life, at the age of forty-five, a fresh stimulus came into Goethe's life, and led him back from a diffusion of literary energies and political and scientific writings to the field in which his true strength lay. This was the friendship with Schiller. He himself calls it his "new spring," his "second youth," and declares that Schiller has "made a poet of him again."

They had crossed one another's paths in several ways since the year 1779, when the influential Minister and favourite, and still more famous poet, had first appeared in the flesh to the enthusiastic student at Stuttgart. Schiller had come to Weimar during Goethe's absence in Italy, and on the latter's return the two had been brought together through the mediation of common friends in the autumn of 1788; but though Goethe was willing enough to help Schiller to a professorship at Jena—which he did in 1789—he took no pains



SCHILLER

to enter into any closer relationship with him as a poet and a man.

From 1789 Schiller lived at Jena, near, but yet far, and his feelings towards the older and more fortunate poet passed through a strange conflict of alternating repulsion and attraction, which ended, however, in an undivided admiration and respect.

Gradually the two drew closer together, and finally Schiller took, in 1794, the decisive step which brought about, with all the suddenness of an overripe event, the conclusion of that close and lasting bond of friendship which united them for the rest of their lives.

Schiller was seeking contributors for his latest periodical, *Die Horen*, a journal intended for the elevation of German taste, to be published with Cotta, the short life of which ran from 1795 to 1797. He had already enlisted many of the most famous writers of the day, and on June 13, 1794, wrote to Goethe, inviting his co-operation. Goethe accepted, and on August 23 Schiller wrote him a long and memorable letter, in which he showed how closely he had followed his development, and with what pains and what success he had tried to enter into the spirit of his life and work. Four days afterwards Goethe replied: "For my birthday, which falls this week, I could have had no more welcome present than your letter, in

which with friendly hand you draw the sum of my existence, and by your sympathy stimulate me to a more lively and assiduous use of my powers."

Thus begun, their friendship ripened rapidly, and it soon became obvious that they had already for some time been making for the same goal, though by parallel paths. This, moreover, they continued to do; for, in spite of the consciousness of common aims, the two poets and the two men remained essentially different throughout the whole course of their intimate association, even as all the circumstances and conditions of their previous life had been in striking contrast.

To these fundamental differences was due, perhaps, also the fact that the friendship never attained to that warmth of personal intimacy which characterized Goethe's relationship with, if not many, yet a few of the friends with whom he was far from being on so equal an intellectual footing.

It is idle to speculate as to which of the two gained more by the friendship. Perhaps at the very outset Goethe came near to being the greater gainer in the stimulus he received from Schiller's enthusiasm, and the warmth of new-found intelligent sympathy for his more serious literary projects, such as *Meister* and *Faust;* perhaps, on the whole, Schiller profited more

from the ten years' intimacy with a man of Goethe's great personality, full knowledge, and wide, direct experience of life. However it may be, the years of their alliance were fruitful years for both.

The first business was the furnishing of contributions for the *Horen.* Schiller would have liked to publish in it *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,* but that was already appearing with Unger in Berlin, a fact at which Goethe expresses his regret, as it would have been so eminently suitable for the new journal.

Goethe's main contributions were the *Römische Elegien* (1795) and the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (1795). He also furnished a translation of the biography of *Benvenuto Cellini* (1796-97). Schiller himself was represented by the *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795) and the *Belagerung von Antwerpen* (1795). The other contributors did not furnish anything particularly noteworthy or striking.

Under the circumstances, we can hardly be very surprised that this new periodical, which was to be so superior to all those already existing, and to elevate and refine the taste of the reading public, met with no very enthusiastic or encouraging reception; in fact, it fell rather flat, and its want of success goaded Goethe and Schiller to an attack upon the mediocre writers of the

day, whose corruption of the public taste they held responsible for their failure.

The idea of writing the distichs known as the *Xenien*, from the two-line poems of Martial describing the *xenia*, or hospitable gifts exchanged at Rome during the Saturnalia, originated at the end of 1795, almost certainly with Goethe. During the winter the idea was matured, and the "gifts" grew apace. It is impossible to decide the share each had in the authorship of the several distichs; no work could have been a more thorough collaboration. In some cases the idea was due to the one, and the execution to the other; one wrote the hexameter, the other the pentameter; and all attempts which have been made to allot them to the one or the other are inconclusive. What is certain is that the sting is mostly due to Schiller; Goethe was much less inclined to trenchant measures.

The *Xenien* appeared in 1796 in the *Musen-almanach*, a new periodical founded by Schiller, which ran from 1796 to 1800. It was the most brilliant of all his journalistic ventures, and in it was published much of the best work of these years which lay at the very centre of Germany's Golden Age. The storm raised by their appearance was unparalleled, though at our distance of time it is hard to understand the bitterness caused by these "little fellows," as their authors called

them, now that the keenness of their personal allusion has become dulled by time.

Needless to say, answer followed, but from the whole tempest aroused, the so-called *Xenienkampf*, Goethe and Schiller withdrew, rightly feeling that the only worthy answer to the brawlers was the production of work which should be worthy of that higher standard of taste of which they had appeared as the champions. Their answer to the *Anti-Xenien* was Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* and Schiller's *Wallenstein*.

First, however, we must speak of a work which was the first and most direct result of Schiller's friendship, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, completed in 1796, thanks largely to the stimulus of Schiller's absorbing and unwearying interest.

Their letters on the subject form one of the most important and interesting portions of that *Correspondence* which lasted throughout the period of their friendship, from 1794 to 1805, though growing naturally far less considerable when Schiller migrated from Jena to Weimar in 1799 —a correspondence unrivalled in the world of letters, in the insight it gives into the details of one of the most famous of literary friendships, and the peep it furnishes into the workshop of genius. Everything is discussed with the greatest freedom; so freely, indeed, are names treated that Goethe left orders that the correspondence should

be kept sealed till 1850. We can trace the inception of works, the sources employed, while many of the poems are only to be fully explained by its aid. Moreover, while, for instance, in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* we have an idealized rather than an objective picture of truth, and in Eckermann's *Conversations* Goethe's intimacy only through the medium of a second personality, we have here the two in undress, the thoughts of the moment as thrown off in the natural, unartificial communications of fellow-workers, and entirely without any thought of the possibility of a future publication.

The *Lehrjahre* had been begun twenty years earlier, and to this pre-Italian period belong in all probability the parts which show the most direct and vivid characterization and description. At first it was to be solely a novel of theatrical life, but afterwards it gained a wider and more general bearing, and became a story of human development and education through experience and personal contact with life.

Six books had been written before the Italian journey. It was now completed by the addition of a seventh and eighth. It contained much of Goethe's own life, observation, and intellectual and moral development, especially from his earlier years, and must be regarded as a part of his autobiographical work, and more particularly as a

complement of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The sixth book consists of the *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*, adapted from autobiographical notes of his pietistic friend, Fräulein von Klettenberg, who had exercised so strong an influence over him on the return from Leipsic.

The construction of the whole is wanting in clearness. Goethe himself described the work to Schiller as "one of the most incalculable productions, whether regarded as a whole or in its parts." It is, in fact, meant to give a broad and varied objective picture of life, not focussed through any moral idea, and as such is necessarily lacking in one kind of unity.

Yet both for itself, and from the time of its appearance, it became the most important in its effects of all German novels, while it may be described as the very foundation of the Romantic School, the youthful disciples of which were thrilled by the mysterious figures of Mignon and the Harper, who, while expressing in part Goethe's own old and still unsatisfied longing for the home of the citron and the orange, voiced those vague yearnings and aspirations for something beyond the actuality of the material world which pervade the writings of that school.

In June, 1797, Goethe finished *Hermann und Dorothea*, a work which Schiller described as the "summit of Goethe's and of all our modern art."

It was only begun in the autumn of 1796, and was thus, unlike most of Goethe's work, carried through without interruption from beginning to end.

Imbued with the spirit of Homer, and written in the classic hexameter, it is yet Greek only in form and conception, while truly German and popular in its faithful presentment of the homely and unpretentious life of a little Rhenish town.

Its immediate forerunner was Voss's *Luise,* but while that work is an idyll, Goethe's poem contains a combination of the epic and idyllic qualities, being perhaps most correctly described as an idyllic epic.

The theme of the union of the son of a well-to-do burgher with a poor exile Goethe took from an incident which occurred at Altmühl in Bavaria in 1732, when Lutherans were exiled for their faith from Salzburg; and by changing the period to that of the French Revolution he gave to his stage a wide background, which enabled him to "reflect the great movements and changes of the world-stage from a small mirror."

The two modes of thought into which the whole world was then divided, revolutionary and conservative sentiments, are contrasted. Mine host of the Golden Lion is brought rudely into contact with the events of the stormy world outside his peaceful home and native town, and sees

his son Hermann—for whom he had planned, with the help of a suitable marriage, a thoroughly comfortable future—allied to Dorothea, whose adventurous appearance is typical of the social upheaval of the revolution to which it is due. Hermann stands halfway between the two extremes, and in this youthful citizen—who, while not sympathizing with all the excesses of the fanatical, yet regards it as a holy duty to defend his native soil from aggression—we may perhaps surmise something of Goethe's own convictions, and of his conception of patriotism.

Another worthy result of the early years of the friendship of the two poets was a series of beautiful ballads, written, as it were, in rivalry in the year 1797, the so-called *Balladenjahr*, and published in the *Musenalmanach* for 1798. Goethe's contributions included the *Zauberlehrling, Schatzgräber, Braut von Korinth, Gott und die Bajadere*, while Schiller added in that one year to the lasting possessions of the German nation a wonderful list of ballads, each of which has become a household word—*Der Taucher, Der Handschuh, Die Kraniche des Ibykus, Der Ritter Toggenburg*, and others.

In this same year Goethe took up *Faust* again, and worked at it till 1801, when it once more came to a standstill. In 1797, too, he made his third and last journey to Switzerland, passing

through Frankfort on his way, and paying what was to be his last visit to his mother. He took with him Christiane and his son August, and all were received with jubilation by the still youthful and merry Frau Rath. Meantime Schiller had been busily working at his first great dramatic masterpiece, and when the new Court Theatre was opened on October 12, 1798, it was with *Wallensteins Lager*, its fine prologue celebrating the auspicious event, and duly heralding the golden time of Weimar's theatrical supremacy. The whole Wallenstein drama in its three parts was not completed till March, 1799, and then followed in unbroken succession the other famous dramas of Schiller, the appearance of which on the Weimar stage give it an undying title to fame in the annals of letters and of dramatic art.

In 1799 Schiller settled finally in Weimar, and what he and Goethe gained in facility of communication we lose in the less full information which their correspondence henceforward naturally supplies.

The next six years, which were those of Schiller's greatest productivity, were not marked by much work of the first importance on Goethe's part. As director he gave much time to theatrical affairs. He wrote prologues and masques; adapted and translated plays for the enrichment of the répertoire; composed the "Festspiele," *Was wir*

bringen (1802), and the *Vorspiel zur Eröffnung des Weimarischen Theaters* (1802); while the most important of all was the drama *Die Natürliche Tochter* (1803), which was to have been only the first part of a trilogy dealing with the French Revolution, but which remained uncompleted. The play is not one of Goethe's most successful creations. The striving after a purely objective treatment borders too closely upon vague generalization, a tendency in Goethe's "classical" period, and lacks the clear individualization essential to the drama.

From 1798 to 1800 he published a periodical, *Die Propyläen,* in which, together with the faithful Meyer, he appeared as art critic, and as continuer of the æsthetic theories and principles of Winckelmann, whom he again in his work *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* (1805) championed in opposition to the principles of the Romantic movement.

Much of his energy was devoted to other than purely literary, to say nothing of poetical work. Of his administration of the theatre and his artistic preoccupations we have already spoken, while to his scientific investigations, more especially of the theory of colours, he devoted a considerable share of his time and thought.

Last but not least, his social duties grew with his fame, and more and more time was taken up

with the receiving of visits, many of which he could have well spared. Most famous of these visitors was Madame de Staël, who, having journeyed expressly to the German Athens to make the acquaintance of its celebrities, was not to be cheated of the acquaintanceship of the greatest of them, though Goethe did his best to avoid her. She was in Weimar at the beginning of 1803, was entertained by him at his house, and met him on several occasions. Her Weimar experiences she enshrined in her book *De l'Allemagne*.

In the early days of 1801 Goethe was seriously ill: it looked as though Schiller would live to mourn his death. The first years of the new century inflicted heavy losses on the ranks of German writers. Herder died in 1803, Klopstock and Kant in the following year.

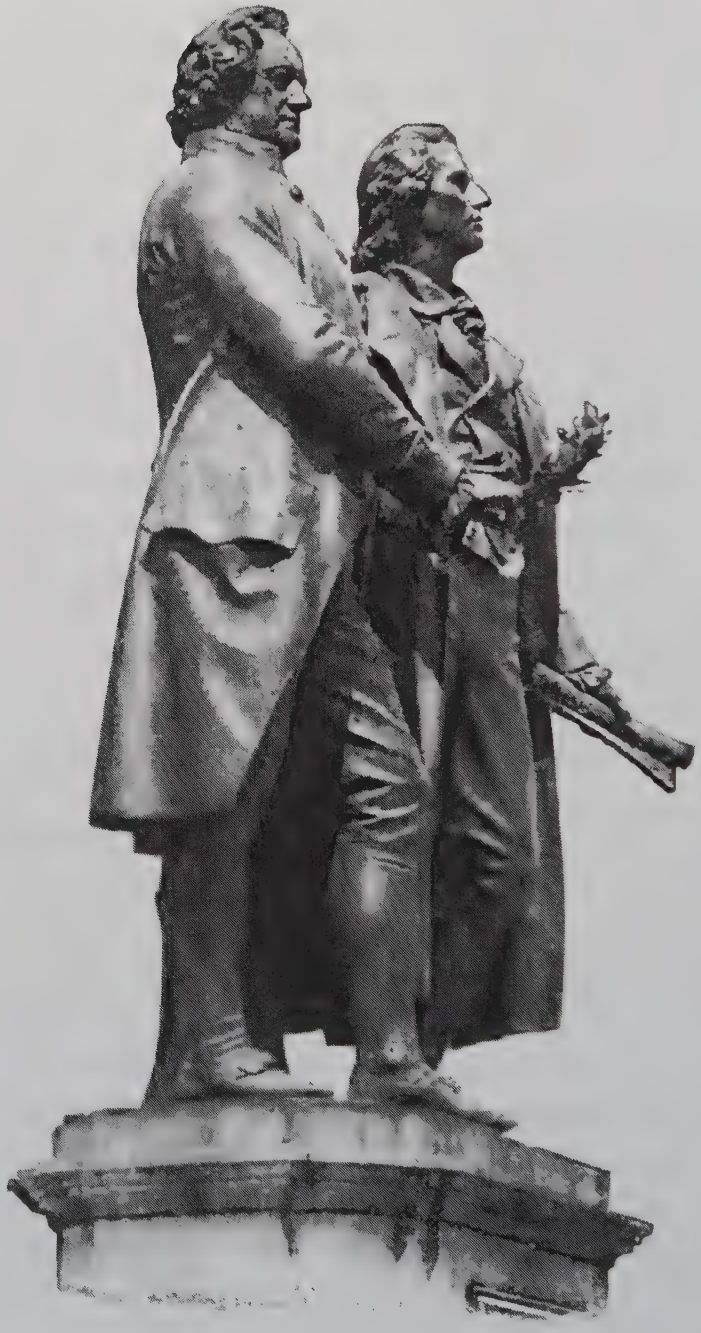
In January, 1805, both Goethe and Schiller were dangerously ill, and again Schiller seemed likely to be the survivor, for he was the first to recover, and at the beginning of March was able to visit Goethe in his sick-room, and to continue work on his great Russian tragedy *Demetrius*.

On April 29 they met for the last time, when Goethe accompanied Schiller as far as his own house, though he was yet too unwell to go on with him to the play. In the theatre Schiller was taken seriously ill, and he died on May 9.

Goethe was still so ill that they did not dare at first to tell him the sad news; but he gathered from the manner of those about him that they were keeping something from him, and his thoughts referred it to Schiller. When Christiane came into his room the morning after Schiller's death, he said to her: "Schiller was very ill yesterday, was he not?" and when she burst into sobs he guessed the worst, exclaiming himself: "He is dead." She confessed that he had spoken the terrible truth, and with bitter tears, and covering his face with his hands, Goethe received the blow, from which he never fully recovered. "I have lost the half of my existence," he wrote to Zelter on June 1.

His first thought was to complete his friend's unfinished tragedy; another design was to compose a great masque in his honour, in which allegorical figures from his works should appear; but neither plan was carried out. The monument he raised to the departed poet was the *Epilog zu Schillers Glocke*, written in the August of 1805, and given as an epilogue to a memorial performance of Schiller's *Lied von der Glocke* on August 10 of that year. It forms a noble and stately eulogy and a touching expression of his sense of loss, while it found a worthy complement in the poem *Terzinen bei der Betrachtung von Schillers Schädel* in 1827.

In Schiller Germany lost its greatest dramatist, and one of its noblest and most inspiring poets and thinkers. It is needless to discuss the question whether he or Goethe was the greater; the answer is one that time is likely to make ever clearer and more certain. Rather we should remember Goethe's advice to the Germans, "to be grateful that they had two such fellows." They were frankly different, and each was in large measure the complement of the other. Schiller's death dissolved for the moment the famous *Dioskurenbund,* but time has united them again, and to-day they live for us, as in the famous statue of Rietschel before the Court Theatre in Weimar, an ideal pair of friends and fellow-workers.



CHAPTER XI

OLD AGE

TWENTY-SEVEN years of life still remained to Goethe, an evening full of activity, which, although devoted more and more to calm reflection and retrospect, saw the completion of more than one task, and, above all, that of his life's work, *Faust*. Science, autobiography, philosophical poetry, *Faust*—on these the greatest part of his labour in these last years was expended.

The time following Schiller's death was a troubled one for Germany, nor did Goethe escape the common lot; the years from 1806 to 1813 brought him many unpleasantnesses.

In 1806 war came to his very door. On October 14 the Battle of Jena was fought. Weimar was invested by the French, and during the plundering by the victorious soldiery his life was in danger, and was only saved by the presence of mind of the faithful Christiane. Moved by the danger and insecurity, and probably by considerations of the circumstances in which those left

behind would find themselves in the case of his death, Goethe carried out the resolution he had long entertained, and went through the religious ceremony of marriage with Christiane. The new Frau Geheimrätin von Goethe was introduced into the Weimar society, but even Goethe's name was not enough to procure her a good reception.

This year of 1806 was in other ways a very eventful one. On October 15 Napoleon entered Weimar, but it was not till two years later that he and Goethe met. The printing of the *Farbenlehre* was at length begun, and the first part of *Faust* completed.

The two following years brought with them heavy losses for Goethe, whose mourning for Schiller was still fresh. In 1807 the death of the Dowager Duchess, Anna Amalia, removed one of the strongest links with the Weimar of his youth, and one who was bound by many ties, not only to the poet, but also to his mother. The next year (1808) that mother herself died, at the age of seventy-eight. She remained the same bright, cheerful "Frau Aja" to the end, meeting death with the same courage and good-humour with which she had always faced life, and loving with a mother's pride her "Wolf," who incidentally was so famous a man. She had lived, too, to welcome and entertain Christiane as a daughter-in-law, and delight in her little grandson.

At the end of her life a fresh communication was established between mother and son by Bettina Brentano, the sister of Clemens Brentano, grand-daughter of the Frau von Laroche in whose house Goethe stayed at Thalehrenbreitstein on the way back from Wetzlar in 1772, and daughter of Maximiliane—the "Max" who married a Frankfort merchant, Brentano, and sought in Goethe's society consolation for the tedium of her new life, to her husband's no slight displeasure and jealousy. Bettina herself married Von Arnim, one of the most celebrated of the Romanticists, and was herself a poetess and very characteristic member of the Romantic school.

Bettina visited Goethe's mother daily, and she communicated to Goethe stories from his mother's lips which formed valuable contributions to his autobiography. Some years before she had sent word to him that she loved him as Mignon did Wilhelm, and this Mignon idea grew in her mind to a passion of romantic and sentimental worship. In 1807 she visited Weimar, and Goethe appears to have been somewhat embarrassed by the force of her fantastic emotions. A correspondence began which was maintained for five years, and out of which Bettina, in her famous book, the *Briefwechsel Goethes mit einem Kinde*, published in 1835, fashioned an autobiographical letter-novel of the most romantic type, and a monument both

to Goethe and to herself, the most impassioned of Goethe's admirers.

Bettina was in some small measure the inspiration of Goethe's *Sonette*, but a far more powerful influence at the time was Minna Herzlieb, the foster-daughter of the publisher, K. F. Frommann in Jena, at whose house Goethe met her. To the circle which met there belonged also Zacharias Werner, in rivalry with whom Goethe was himself tempted to try the "romantic" sonnet form. Under the influence of the *Sonettenwut* he wrote a cycle of seventeen sonnets, which, however, are not among his best work, and do nothing to increase his fame. They are chiefly addressed to Minna, for whom a passion had sprung up in his breast which he found it hard to fight down.

His love and conflict are also reflected in the *Wahlverwandtschaften* (Elective Affinities), which was completed and finished in October, 1809, and which, originally intended to form one of the stories in the *Wanderjahre*, grew too large for its frame and attained its present form. In it we have a psychological study of the cross-attractions between four people acting like the affinities of chemical substances. We have the married pair, Edward and Charlotte, and the Captain and Ottilie, Charlotte's niece, and the working of natural affinity is just as fateful as in *Werther*, though endowed with more dignity and narrated

with more reserve and classic restraint. Charlotte and the Captain are strong enough to bear their fate, but Edward and Ottilie are only released by death. Goethe himself and Minna were to some extent the prototypes of Edward and Ottilie, though it is needless to say that the likeness is less pronounced than in the corresponding novel of his youth. In construction and depth of psychological analysis it is one of Goethe's most perfect masterpieces.

The preceding year, 1808, which saw the death of his mother, was in other respects a marked year in his life. On October 2 he had the famous interview with Napoleon at Erfurt, in which the greatest man of action and the foremost man of letters of the day found that a personal meeting did not diminish the opinion each had formed of the other. Napoleon, breakfasting, beckoned Goethe to approach, and addressed him with the words, "Vous êtes un homme!" He talked to him of *Werther*, telling him that he had read it seven times, and suggesting alterations of the plot.

Goethe had always admired Napoleon. He was not hostile, or even indifferent, to the national exertions in the Wars of Liberation; he merely believed Napoleon invincible and those efforts vain. "Shake away at your chains," he said to Körner in 1813; "the man is too big for you."

In 1808, too, appeared the first part of *Faust*, to be followed only after more than twenty years by the second. In 1809 he formed with Von Voigt the commission for all institutions for science and art, an office which must have been congenial and interesting to him.

After many years of labour appeared at last, in 1810, his great work of scientific controversy, *Die Farbenlehre*, the one to which he had devoted the most effort, and, somewhat pathetically, the one which is scientifically the least successful. The whole work is too subjective, treats rather of the psychological effect than of the physiological properties of light and colour. The historical part is as excellent as the controversial part is weak and unworthy of its author. In the latter, vituperation, confident assertion, and appeals (which have remained unheard) to posterity, do not form a good substitute for fair battle offered to Newton on his own ground—for the "mathematical" as against the "natural" treatment. In spite of Goethe's irritation at its stupidity, humanity still to-day regards, with Newton, white light as compounded, and not simple, and colours as wave-phenomena, and not as various combinations of the simple ingredients of light and darkness. In spite of the magnificently vivid descriptions of phenomena and the other excellences of the work, it must be regarded as

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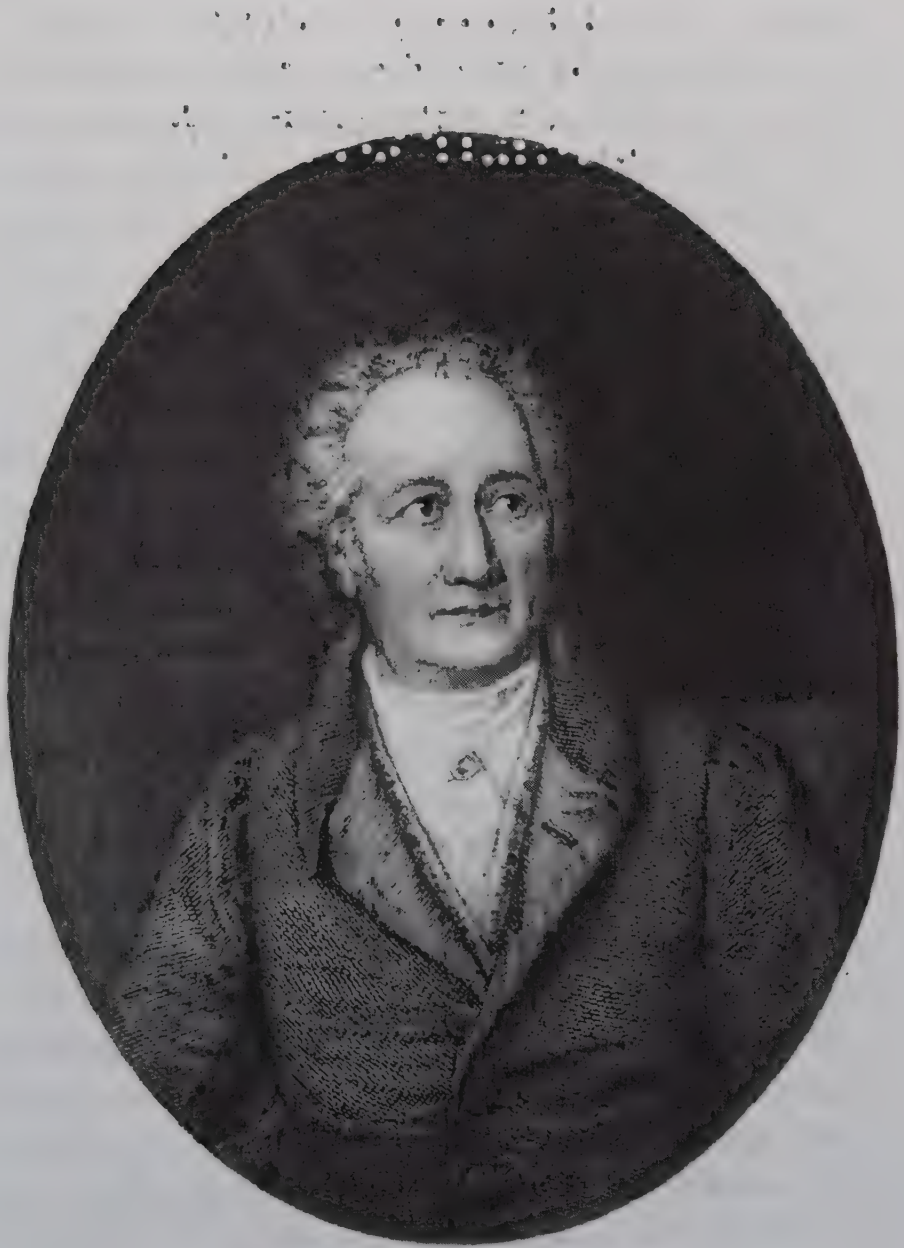

GOETHE AGED SEVENTY-NINE

Goethe's great failure, his one great persistence in a wrong cause, his one battle on the losing side.

Much time is given in this last period of his life to the study of natural science. In the years 1817 to 1824 there appear *Zur Naturwissenschaft überhaupt* and *Zur Morphologie*, and all his writings, including the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, *Spiraltendenz der Pflanzen*, with other botanical essays, and his treatise on the *intermaxillary bone* in man—the discovery of which was, perhaps, his most important contribution to science—are permeated with the idea of a general development running through the whole universe, which was to receive a more conscious expression in the theory of evolution, to be formulated by Darwin more than twenty years after his death. At the same time there is always in Goethe's scientific thought too much of the subjective, anthropomorphizing tendency, too much of the "idea," to leave full room for the purely objective "experience."

In the last two decades of his life the autobiographical writings, which form more than a fifth of his whole work, play a specially important part. In the year 1811 there began to appear the greatest of all of them, and one of the most wonderful and interesting of autobiographies ever written, *Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in which the man of sixty looks back on his youth,

and, as the title indicates, interprets facts by the light of poetry. As these are at the same time only, in the main, remembered facts, and the author, moreover, attached, in this picture of the development of an individual human soul, greater importance to the presentment of the underlying general truth than to literal exactness, we cannot place that reliance upon its word that we can upon its spirit. Yet, in spite of the inaccuracies which have been laid bare by patient investigation, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* will always remain one of the world's greatest books—a charming picture of the youth of genius, and at the same time a priceless source of information as to the life, and, above all, the literature, of an epoch. Part I., containing the first five books, appeared in the above-mentioned year, the next five in 1812, the two remaining parts in 1814 and 1833 respectively.

Other biographical works appeared in quick succession. The *Italienische Reise* was published in 1816-17, the *Kampagne in Frankreich* in 1822, the *Belagerung von Mainz* in 1829. The *Annalen oder Tages- und Jahreshefte, als Ergänzung meiner sonstigen Bekenntnisse,* which embrace the years from 1749 to 1822, were written from 1819 to 1826, and published in 1830. The record of his old age is completed by the *Tagebücher,* which he continued to dictate right up to the last, and the

various *Correspondences* and recorded *Conversations*, of which mention will be made later.

The celebration of peace in 1814 Goethe, in spite of the slight interest he displayed in the *Befreiungskriege*, commemorated by an allegorical festival play, *Des Epimenides Erwachen*, written for Berlin, which contains much fervid patriotism, though it must be added that its composition was due rather to external instigation than to a spontaneous impulse.

The great work of the years 1814 to 1819, which appeared in the last-named year, the *Westöstliche Divan*, does not bear testimony to an ordinary patriotic interest in the fate of his fatherland, but is, as the opening poem declares, a flight from a world of tottering thrones and crumbling empires to the serene atmosphere of the East.

The translation of the *Divan* of the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz by the Viennese Orientalist, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, had just appeared, and Goethe, who had for some time been taking a special interest in Oriental thought and poetry, was fired by his work to production, and resolved to throw into this form, so suitable to his age and the circumstances of the time, his own reflections and experiences. He was further stimulated by the attachment for Marianne von Willemer, the newly-married wife of a Frankfort banker, with whom he stayed at

the Gerbermühle in Frankfort in 1814 and 1815, when he saw his home again after seventeen years, and for the last time.

Not only did Marianne take the liveliest interest in the work, but she also herself composed some of the most beautiful songs in the collection. She appears under the name of Suleika, while Goethe is Hatem. Napoleon is Timur, and a *Buch des Timur* was planned, but did not get beyond a couple of poems. The title "West-Eastern" is merited, for, in spite of the Oriental names, colour, imagery, and to some extent form, it is Western in thought and underlying experience.

The years 1813 and 1816 again inflicted heavy losses on Goethe's circle. In the former, Wieland, doyen of the Weimar group, died at the ripe age of eighty; in the latter, Christiane's death dissolved a union of thirty years, and robbed him of a faithful companion and helpmeet, who had become through constant association ever more a part of the daily and hourly needs. His sense of irreparable loss Goethe expressed in the well-known verse:

> "Du versuchst, O Sonne, vergebens,
> Durch die düstern Wolken zu scheinen!
> Der ganze Gewinn meines Lebens
> Ist, ihren Verlust zu beweinen."

Yet, in spite of illness, loss, and care, neither

energy nor will weakened; restlessly he worked on to the fulfilment of his destiny. He is now the Patriarch, the grand old man, of Weimar; now pilgrims journey from far lands to do homage to the still living Immortal. Artists seek to insure his features from oblivion; his words and writings are treasured by those who, through the consciousness of his present greatness, have a presentiment of still greater fame to come. He is the acknowledged chief of literature; his works are translated into all civilized tongues. The age of his own youth and prime gradually becomes a vanished past; one after the other old links are severed, and he experiences the truth that to live long means to outlive. Yet succeeding generations are around him. His son August and daughter-in-law Ottilie lead their not very happy or successful married life under his roof, while his little grandsons form an ever-increasing source of comfort to him, and compensate for the inharmonious element which their parents have introduced into his life.

In the very year of Christiane's death he founded a new journal, *Kunst und Altertum*, which appeared, in six volumes, down to the year of his death, and, written almost exclusively by Goethe himself, was representative of his manifold interests and his cosmopolitanism in literature. England did not escape his attention; Byron,

Carlyle, and Scott especially were followed by him with appreciation. It is a depository for various productions — criticism, short poems, essays.

In 1816-17 we have seen that he published the *Italienische Reise.* In 1817 he gave up the direction of the theatre after a management of a quarter of a century, retaining thenceforward only the superintendence of all other institutions for science and art in Weimar and Jena.

In 1815 to 1819 there appeared with Cotta in Stuttgart and Tübingen an edition of his works in twenty volumes, and he began the preparation of the final edition, the *Ausgabe letzter Hand,* which appeared, likewise with Cotta, from 1827 to 1830, in forty volumes, the labour on which helped to fill with interesting employment the end of his tireless old age.

In 1821 there appeared the first part of the *Wanderjahre,* with the *Wahlverwandtschaften* and *Faust* one of the three great works of this final period. The second part did not appear till 1829, as vols. xxi. to xxiii. of the *Ausgabe letzter Hand.* The whole is not grouped around Wilhelm's personality, as is the *Lehrjahre;* it is more directly pedagogical, a great novel dealing with the moral education of man. The characters are shadowy; the style is that of his old age—too reflective and abstract; the language is marked by stereotyped

expressions and formulas. Some of the short stories are fresh and vivid, though most belong to an earlier time. Among the best are the *Flucht nach Aegypten* and the *Mann von fünfzig Jahren.* Yet the whole is full of beauty and wisdom, and without it our knowledge of Goethe's moral world would be much less complete.

Three volumes of the final edition were reserved for the *Wanderjahre;* but, deceived by a too spacious handwriting, Goethe found the manuscript insufficient, and to fill the space allotted all sorts of maxims and proverbs were inserted, which have no organic connection with the whole, and serve to make the work even more lacking in unity than it would otherwise have been.

Moralizing poetry and philosophical prose in many forms composed a considerable proportion of the writings of the later years, and under such titles as *Sprüche; Sprichwörtlich; Gott, Gemüt, und Welt; Zahme Xenien,* we have storehouses of his wisdom, while the confessions contained in his various autobiographical works complete our full record of his philosophy in the reflective evening of his life.

For years he had been in the habit of visiting famous watering-places. In 1807 and the following years he was frequently in Carlsbad. During the years 1821 to 1823 he paid an annual visit to Marienbad. On the second of these, in 1822, he

met a young girl of nineteen, Ulrike von Levetzow, who aroused in him a last and violent passion. In spite of the more than fifty years which lay between them, Goethe certainly entertained for a time the thought of a union, though such a project was never put into words. His love and the pain of renunciation he expressed in the beautiful *Marienbader Elegie,* which appears in the works as the central member of the *Trilogie der Leidenschaft.*

The year 1823 is marked by the establishment of Johann Peter Eckermann as Goethe's permanent secretary and fellow-worker. In place of occasional assistance and varying companionship, Goethe now enjoyed for the remainder of his life the advantage of the constant presence of a faithful, patient, and adoring disciple. Though somewhat self-important and apt to be ponderous, Eckermann was gifted with many of the best qualities of a Boswell. He was receptive and appreciative, and to his unquestioning, painstaking fidelity we owe the *Gespräche mit Goethe* (1836-48), which preserve for us, with a directness no formal work could rival, the workings of Goethe's mind, and lead us, as it were, into the workshop of his ideas.

Eckermann's own dreams of literary fame have remained unfulfilled, but he has won for himself the gratitude of posterity, and a place in the

literary firmament as a satellite of the greater luminary. After Goethe's death he was appointed, with Riemer, his literary executor, and from 1832 to 1842 they published in twenty volumes the *Nachgelassene Werke*, thus making up the whole final edition to sixty volumes.

In 1828 Goethe published his *Briefwechsel mit Schiller*, the only one he himself prepared for publication, except that with Zelter, which appeared in 1833-34.

In these years death was very busy in the ranks of his friends. In 1827 Charlotte von Stein died at the advanced age of eighty-six, in 1828 the Duke, and in 1830 the Duchess Luise. In the latter year, too, his son August died in Rome, and his death was a great blow to the father, who had loved him in spite of his wild, reckless life and moral instability.

In 1830 the *Ausgabe letzter Hand* reached completion. It contained the second part of *Faust* as a fragment, but it was not till July of the following year that Goethe finished this life's work, to which he had devoted his chief energies since 1825. It appeared the year after his death, in 1833.

We cannot here speak in detail of the great work, the composition of which extended over more than sixty years of his life, and into which he put the vivid realism of his stormy youth and

the calm, reflective wisdom of his extreme old age. Merely to chronicle the literature that has gathered about *Faust* would take up many times the space that is here at disposal.

The First Part has long been recognised as one of the profoundest pictures in the world's literature of the inner life of man, in which everyone can see mirrored his own inward experiences, and the conflict of the two sides which make up our dual nature.

The history of the sixteenth-century scholar, magician, and dealer in the black arts, Faust, whom Goethe, like others who treated the subject, had learnt to know from the *Faustbuch* which appeared in 1587, becomes the history of man making his way through life, and so conditioned by the strange partnership of his material and spiritual natures, that he can neither find lasting happiness in the satisfaction of his senses, nor entirely dwell beyond the world of sense.

The story of Faust's compact with the devil, of Gretchen's love and death, have become the common property of the civilized world. It is this first part which is *Faust* to the great majority; the Gretchen episode has come to be looked upon as the complete tragedy.

Yet it is not thus that the whole plan can be understood. It was long the fashion to regard the Second Part as unintelligible, as the over-

GRETCHEN

[illegible]

abstract and too-allegorical production of an old man; but patient investigation has explained much that was obscure, and proved more and more the organic unity of the whole.

There is a parallelism in the two parts: the incidents and characters of the first are reflected in the second on a higher plane. Helena in the second part corresponds to Gretchen in the first, the classical *Walpurgisnacht* to the Northern, and Faust himself has reached a higher stage of his development. The first part represented the microcosm of the individual; in the second the scope is extended, and the picture is of the macrocosm of society.

Of the gradual growth of *Faust* something has been said in the course of the Life. Four stages of its evolution are to be noted. The first, commonly known as the *Urfaust*, was the original form, which probably was written during the closing years of the last Frankfort time, in 1773-75, and which is preserved in the copy of a Weimar maid of honour, Fräulein von Göchhausen; the second is the *Fragment* published in 1790; the third the completed *Erste Teil*, which appeared in 1808; and lastly the *Zweite Teil*, which, finished in 1831, was, as we have seen, not published till the year after Goethe's death.

With the completion of *Faust* Goethe looked upon his life's work as ended. He told Ecker-

mann that he regarded the time that remained to him as a pure gift. Yet he worked on, dictating his diary, arranging his writings, reading and discoursing on the most varied topics, and taking the liveliest interest in everything around him. He continued his correspondence to the end, his last letter being sent to Wilhelm von Humboldt on March 17, 1832. He set his house in order, made provision for those he would leave behind, and discussed with Eckermann and Riemer the publication of his posthumous works.

Since the death of his son peace reigned in his house, and, freed from conjugal incompatibility, Ottilie devoted herself more freely to the father-in-law she genuinely loved, as had his wayward son. The two boys, Walter and Wolfgang, their grandfather's delight and consolation, completed the family. With them his last birthday was spent at Ilmenau, the scene of many pleasant days, and a place teeming with reminiscences that stretched back half a century and more. The evening before, he ascended the Gickelhahn, and found on the walls of the wooden shooting-box which crowned its highest point the famous poem, "Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh," which he had written in pencil there in 1780, and renewed in 1813. He read the lines aloud, and repeated with tears in his eyes the final words, "Ja; warte nur, balde ruhest du auch!"

On March 16, 1832, he was taken ill, but once more his vigorous constitution seemed likely to carry him through, and he appeared to be gradually recovering. However, a serious relapse set in, and on the 21st, although he did not know it, and talked cheerfully of his plans for the fine April weather, the end was near. He was suffering from a chill, contracted by leaving an overheated room, and the lungs were fatally affected. He sat fully dressed in the simple little bedroom leading out of his Spartan-like study, and thought of continuing the work which now at last was really over.

On the morning of the 22nd his strength was waning fast. He sat in the arm-chair by his bedside, holding the hand of Ottilie, who in these last days was his unwearying nurse and attendant. Partly slumbering, partly wandering in his thoughts, he spoke of Schiller, whose name, with that of Ottilie, was constantly on his lips; and of a fair female head of his dreams. Shortly before noon he drew himself together in the chair, and went peacefully to sleep, and those around him hardly knew when his spirit passed away for ever.

Whether his last words were "More light!" is doubtful; if so, they were a simple direction to his servant to open the second shutter. His last utterance appears to have given no such oppor-

tunity to a melodramatic sentiment he would have been the first to deprecate, but to have been one of simple human affection, "Gieb mir dein Patschhändchen" (Give me your little hand), addressed to Ottilie, the comfortress of his last moments.

He was buried in the ducal vault, whither the remains of Schiller had been removed, and where Karl August rests beside the two most famous of his subjects.

So Goethe passed away, in the eighty-third year of his age, after a life full of honours, and one of unremitting labour in the pursuit of those ideals whose attainment seemed to him the most worthy object of human endeavour. He passed through many phases in the course of his lifelong development, and underwent those changes of view which are the very condition of intellectual growth. What seemed good to the Frankfort youth was no longer the ideal of the mature man, but through all there is a wonderful unity of purpose, a fearless marching forward to the exploitation of the best that lay in his own soul.

He has been called the apostle of self-culture, but it was a self-culture not for self, but for the common good. He was not an exponent and preacher of the doctrine of art for art's sake, or culture for culture's sake, but of the doctrine that each of us has powers, and that it is the duty of

each one to develop those powers to the uttermost.

All in due place and each to his vocation: he had examined himself in his youth, and found that the *thing* that lay in him was the mysterious gift of poetic creation, and the force that lay in him impelled him to travel the furthest possible along what he held to be his predestined path.

With a power of detachment which gave him a wonderful capacity of judging himself as well as others objectively, while at the same time it gave rise to the so frequently repeated charge of coldness and indifference, he saw in himself one link in the endless chain of development, and held the cultivation of that part of the universal whole which lay in his own soul to be his first and most immediate duty. If this be selfishness, it is the highest type of selfishness, a selfishness that were well to be imitated; for only through the portals of self can we pass out to the aid of our fellows.

To this conception of the primal duty of the cultivation of self is due, too, what we might call the honesty of his literary work, in that his literary profession was at the same time the faith by which he lived. Art was not for him something that lay outside the artist, but something that, proceeding from within, modified the whole

man and his whole life, making of that life itself his greatest work of art.

This desire to "raise the pyramid of his existence" as high as possible came to him in youth, and accompanied him throughout his long career. Thus life and works are with him intimately and inseparably bound up, and of Goethe himself almost more than of any writer are his own words true:

> "Wer den Dichter will verstehen,
> Muss in Dichters Lande gehen."

For sixty years he was the most famous writer among all German-speaking peoples, for more than half that time the leading man of letters of the world; to-day he stands forth as the greatest writer since Shakespeare, the greatest literary interpreter of the modern world and of modern ideas. What contemporaries were less able to judge of, (his place in the world's literature,) we are growing better able to appreciate, and the voices grow ever more numerous that place him in the very foremost rank.

He found Germany in the shackles of a hide-bound literary conventionality, borrowed from France, and upheld by Gottsched in the capacity of a self-esteemed dictator of letters; he inaugurated that eruption known as the *Sturm und Drang*, which struggled through license to liberty,

and he passed through it on his triumphant course, as through a mere phase, to found a great classic literature, as national and independent as it became cosmopolitan in its interests and in the respect it commanded.

Famous at twenty-three, he pressed ever onward through the manifold successes of a life rich in wellnigh universal interests, adding steadily to the solidarity of his fame; and after having been long a classic in his lifetime, and the voice of his country and age, ended a serene old age, with spirit and energy unbroken, by a death that caught him, as he would have wished it, at work, and took him, seated, near the workshop where his tools were but laid down, not laid by to rust.

One is always tempted to quote Goethe to explain Goethe, and our last words shall be his own—that translation of his lines that Carlyle, Scott, Wordsworth, and other English admirers chose for the seal they sent him on his last birthday, and which can so fitly be applied to him who wrote them:

"Like as a star
That maketh not haste,
That taketh not rest,
Be each one fulfilling his God-given hest."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE following brief bibliographical note gives the authorized editions of Goethe's works which appeared during his lifetime, together with the most authoritative of recent publication, and concludes with a list of the principal biographies. With the help of the indications here given, students desiring a fuller knowledge ot the immense Goethe literature which has arisen, and to which each succeeding year makes important additions, will have no difficulty in finding their way into the wide field of Goethe bibliography.

Complete Works.

The five following authorized editions of the works appeared during Goethe's lifetime and under his direction:

1. *Schriften:* Leipsic, Göschen, 1787-1790. 8 vols.
2. *Neue Schriften:* Berlin, Unger, 1792-1800. 7 vols.
3. *Werke:* Tübingen, Cotta, 1806-1810. 13 vols.

4. *Werke:* Stuttgart and Tubingen, Cotta, 1815-1819. 20 vols.
5. *Werke: Vollständige Ausgabe letzter Hand,* Stuttgart and Tübingen, Cotta, 1827-1830. 40 vols.

   In the preparation of this edition Goethe was assisted by Eckermann and Riemer, who in 1832 to 1842 published, as his literary executors, the *Nachgelassene Werke* in 20 vols., thus bringing the whole edition up to 60 vols.

The Hempel Edition, published at Berlin in 1868 and following years, contains the Complete Works in 36 vols.

In *Deutsche Nationalliteratur* (edited by J. Kürschner) Goethe's works, published from 1882 to 1897, by different editors, comprise vols. lxxxii. to cxvii.

The Standard Edition is now the Weimar Edition, *Goethes Werke, herausgegeben im Auftrage der Grossherzogin Sophie von Sachsen,* Weimar, 1887 and following years, of which close upon a hundred volumes have appeared, and which is still in progress.

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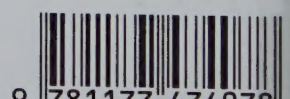

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